

CALIFORNIA

STRIVING READERS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN A GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

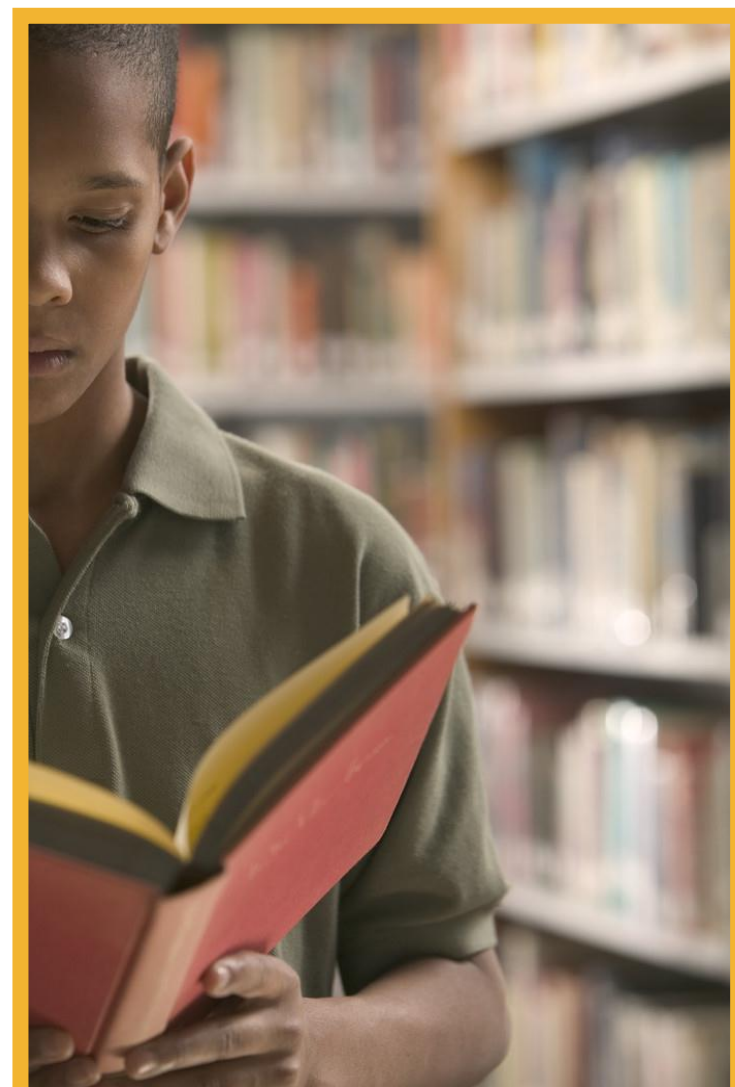


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Introduction

In 2010, the California State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the California *Common Core State Standards for English-Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects for Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* (hereinafter referred to as the *CCSS for ELA*). The purpose of the new standards, developed at the national level in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, is to provide rigorous and challenging standards for all students, regardless of background, to achieve high levels of literacy for college and career success. In 2012, the SBE also adopted the *California English Language Development (ELD) Standards*, replacing California's 1997 *ELD* standards. The new *California ELD Standards* are fully aligned with the *CCSS for ELA*.

The *CCSS for ELA* promote an exciting approach to effective teaching and deep learning—to merge school and the real world for authentic purposes and applications of literacy—with an emphasis on twenty-first (21st) century skills of creativity, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and innovative uses of technology. Successful implementation of the new standards calls for enhanced professional learning for educators, new teacher preparation requirements, research-based instructional practices, new curricula (both print and digital), use of data analysis to inform instruction, and more effective use of technology.

Technology increases the intensity and complexity of skills needed within learning environments and requires a literate student to possess a wide range of abilities and competencies—from reading, writing, and collaborating in person and online, to participating in virtual classrooms using various modalities of communication. The National Council of Teachers of English's *Definition of 21st Century Literacies* establishes essential knowledge and skills that twenty-first century readers and writers must possess (NCTE 2012):

- Proficiency with the tools of technology
- Ability to build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally
- Ability to design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes
- Ability to manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information
- Ability to create, critique, and evaluate multi-media texts
- Ability to attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments

Twenty-first century literacy encompasses society's increasing reliance on technology for communication. The *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* defines literacy in English as “an individual's ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society” (LINCS 2012). This broader view of literacy encompasses more than the traditional concept of literacy as simply an individual's ability to read. California's *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Plan* includes all aspects of language and literacy for college and career readiness, emphasizing the *CCSS for ELA* and incorporating the four domains of communication—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—on a continuum of learning from birth through grade twelve.

Local Impact of the *SRCL Plan*

Ensuring access and equity for full implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* demands strong leadership for district and school wide literacy efforts. Content-area and reading/language arts teachers need to collaborate as a team to add new and effective instructional strategies to their teaching repertoires to motivate, engage, scaffold, and accelerate each student's language and literacy development. Additionally, administrators and teachers need to develop new content and language objectives to implement the new standards. Ongoing professional learning is necessary to support educators in learning to use new performance-based assessments to inform instruction, provide strategic interventions, and to effectively support students from diverse backgrounds. Principals need to provide a strong support system that empowers teachers with instructional and assessment practices that affirm student identities, build upon prior experiences, and help connect school to the real world through project-based learning.

Implementing the *CCSS for ELA* provides an unprecedented opportunity for educators to rethink how to support all students by refining instructional and assessment practices to accelerate learning. Statewide assessment data indicate that there is an urgent need to address the language and literacy development of California's underserved populations, specifically English learners, students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and African-American and Hispanic students. There is a critical need for educators to use data to inform and guide instruction, implement more effective and efficient systems to identify the needs of struggling readers, apply interventions, and continually monitor progress across classrooms and grade levels. It is crucial to scaffold and differentiate instruction and accelerate progress through culturally and linguistically sound approaches, all of which are backed by research, to improve overall literacy levels for each specific group of learners.

California's Urgent Need

The rich diversity of California's 9.4 million children challenges educators to provide all students with necessary literacy instruction and skills that will prepare them to fully participate and succeed in a 21st century, global and knowledge-based economy. Essential literacy skills include the ability to effectively communicate through speaking and writing, fluently read and comprehend grade-level text, think critically, and solve problems. Strong English literacy, biliteracy, and multi-literacy skills, as well as cultural proficiency, separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex 21st century school and work environments from those who are not.

The critical need to address the literacy development of California children and students cannot be underestimated. As the facts listed illustrate, many students will be at academic risk if improved approaches to literacy instruction are not an immediate and central focus of California's educational system.

- Approximately 53 percent of children live in low-income households and approximately 23 percent—nearly 1 in 4—live at or below the federal poverty line (California Budget Project 2011). The relationship between income level and school success is well-established through multiple research studies (Center on Education Policy 2012).
- Approximately 31 percent of California's African American children and 30 percent of Hispanic/Latino children live in poverty. The majority (64 percent) of poor children in California are United States-born Latinos (PPIC 2011).
- California has one of the most diverse populations in the nation, with one in three children entering kindergarten speaking a language other than English (CDE 2009b).
- Overall average scores for California students in grades four and eight remain at the "basic" achievement level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment, indicating only partial mastery of fundamental skills at each grade (CDE 2010g).

These statistics support the sense of urgency in implementing a state literacy plan that promotes a comprehensive and sustained research-based approach to empowering pedagogy for excellent first teaching and intense, scaffolded differentiated instruction and literacy intervention. Effective local literacy plans include schoolwide efforts to ensure that

struggling readers make accelerated progress toward grade level proficiency and provide all students with the academic language and literacy skills needed for success in higher education and career.

California's Comprehensive Literacy Effort

In early 2011, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and SBE President Michael Kirst assembled an extensive committee of practitioners, advocates, researchers, and parents to design the *SRCL Plan* for birth through grade twelve. The result of the committee's efforts is a comprehensive, articulated system of research-based recommendations aimed at ensuring that every child receives the instruction and support necessary to achieve proficient to advanced language and literacy skills across academic disciplines. The goal of a statewide plan is to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) with guidance in establishing organizational and instructional support systems that nurture every child's language and literacy success in school and ensure college and career readiness.

The *SRCL Plan* will support LEAs by:

- Focusing on how the development of language and literacy in the early years directly connects to school success
- Serving as a foundation for professional learning and providing a source of ongoing instructional support during the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA*
- Emphasizing the use of assessment data to guide and inform instruction
- Recognizing the unique diversity in California's student population and acknowledging the inherent cultural and linguistic resources that enrich classrooms, but also challenging educators to address the needs of all learners
- Emphasizing the engagement of families as partners by recognizing families' strengths and goals for their children and by supporting a seamless educational process from birth through grade twelve and beyond

- Incorporating the new requirements of the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards* to guide and inform policymakers and district leaders as they seek to implement the new and revised standards, tailor instruction to accelerate achievement of California's diverse student population, and close persistent achievement gaps
- Providing college and career readiness guidelines to ensure that students develop language, literacy, and cultural learning opportunities that build 21st century skills and engage students in creative and collaborative inquiry to become conscientious and productive global citizens

Central to the *SRCL Plan* is accelerating language and literacy skills and fostering the development of each student's highest learning potential. The plan is built upon the understanding that struggling readers will make accelerated progress toward grade-level proficiency with a comprehensive, system-wide, sustained approach to intense reading instruction and intervention that is based on students' diagnosed needs and current and confirmed research. The *SRCL Plan* specifies literacy goals and objectives—within developmental stages and grades—and includes a multi-tiered Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) approach. RtI² focuses on effective tiered instruction that emphasizes high-quality first teaching in every grade and discipline, early screening and identification of language and literacy instructional needs, and differentiated instruction and intervention when necessary to develop the language and literacy skills of all students. These strategies are important to identify, target and address the needs of students who are at risk for long-term academic struggles.

Key Changes and the Features of the *CCSS for ELA*

Key changes that the *CCSS for ELA* bring to California include increased rigor and focus on broad reading and writing expectations in history-social science, science, and technical subjects, as well as language arts. These expectations expand and reinforce the necessary language and academic literacy skills required to access and comprehend content in all disciplines. They bring a new emphasis on reading for information and inquiry by equally balancing literature and informational text equally in the early grades and increasing the focus on informational text across the academic disciplines in grades six through twelve. The new standards also emphasize academic vocabulary acquisition, critical analysis of both fiction and non-fiction, and writing narrative, informational, and argumentative pieces based on evidence from sources. Finally, the *CCSS for ELA* bring new standards for using technology, requiring students to research, collaborate, produce, and publish their work through electronic means.

The *CCSS for ELA* are built upon core anchor standards for College and Career Readiness. According to the standards, to be college and career ready students must have the ability to:

- Develop deep understanding of academic content
- Adapt communication to a variety of contexts and purposes
- Develop academic independence
- Comprehend and critique complex materials
- Evaluate authors' claims and evidence
- Assess and marshal evidence in support of an interpretation
- Communicate effectively verbally and in writing
- Use technology thoughtfully and effectively
- Understand and appreciate other cultures and perspectives

Key features of the *CCSS for ELA* are summarized below. Each section of the *SRCL Plan* looks closely at these key features and at the student expectations of the age or grade span.

Reading

- Increased text complexity through a grade-by grade “staircase”
- Larger emphasis on a diverse assortment of complex informational text in addition to literature
- Increased requirement to pull more meaning from text, make connections among ideas and texts, and to consider and evaluate textual evidence

Writing

- Emphasis on specific writing types (arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives)

- Writing-reading connection requiring students to draw inferences from evidence in sources, both literary and informational
- Development of arguments drawn from relevant evidence, sound reasoning, and logical claims
- Focus on inquiry and short and longer research

Speaking and Listening

- Focus on developing a broad range of oral communication and interpersonal skills
- Emphasis on collaborative conversations
- Requirement to express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate and evaluate information, use media and visual displays, and adapt speech to context and task

Language

- Focus on the acquisition and use of new academic and discipline-specific vocabulary
- Prioritization to understand and use of formal written and spoken English in academic and workplace settings
- Approach to language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives suited for different contexts

New Opportunities for California's Children and Students

Improving language and literacy outcomes for California's children and students requires extensive collaboration with early learning educators, higher education, families, and community stakeholders. In addition to the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*, the *SRCL Plan* incorporates the *National Technology Standards (NTS)* for teachers and students to guide professional learning in the area of technology to ensure mastery of 21st century learning objectives. Strong emphasis is also placed on early learning initiatives and *California's Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*, *Preschool Learning Foundations* (both of these documents hereinafter referred to as the *Early Learning*

Foundations) which are central to the birth through age five section of the plan. California is currently collaborating with higher education to ensure that high school graduates are adequately prepared for college-level academics and to ensure that early learning educator preparation programs are aligned with the new requirements through the Faculty Initiative Project (see <http://www.wested.org/facultyinitiative/>). The *SRCL Plan* recognizes the essential role of families, as well as local and global communities, on language and literacy development and supports California's recent adoption of the State Seal of Biliteracy, a program that formally recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing one or more languages in addition to English.

Local Responsibilities

The following recommendations will strengthen local literacy efforts to improve language and literacy outcomes for all students:

- In early learning settings, widely distribute California's *Early Learning Foundations* and supporting publications for dual language learners and students with disabilities and provide extensive and ongoing professional support to teachers.
- In kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) settings, widely distribute the *CCSS for ELA*, the *California ELD Standards*, and the *NTS* and provide extensive and ongoing professional support to teachers.
- Expand school and district use of data to inform instruction, evaluate the implementation of effective instructional practices, and establish priorities for professional learning.
- Provide standards-aligned curricula and research-based instruction designed to meet the individual needs of all students and target instruction and curriculum to support the language and literacy development of underserved student subgroups.
- Implement effective first teaching and early screening and diagnosis that are linked to assessment of the standards and ensure instructional interventions by following the RtI² approach in K–12.

- Provide continuous, research-based professional learning for teachers and administrators to focus on the diverse language and literacy needs of children, infancy through grade twelve, the *CCSS for ELA*, and empirically validated literacy approaches that increase the effectiveness of instruction.
- Engage families and communities in planning and implementing comprehensive instructional approaches, language and literacy development in English and the home language, as needed, and support the enrichment potential of biliteracy.
- Increase effective use of technology by administrators, teachers, and students to enrich learning opportunities and build 21st century skills, such as engaging in creative, collaborative inquiry using English and world languages in global learning networks. Technology can also assist with early identification of students' special needs, collecting data, reinforcing instruction, making adaptations, and individualizing teaching and learning.

Background information on California's children and students follows, with a description of each component of the *SRCL Plan* and a brief narrative of what is currently in place and California's plans for next steps. Each component concludes with a table outlining the goals and objectives by age and grade span to assist educators in the development of local plans. The document concludes with a list of resources and references that the state literacy team reviewed and used to develop the *SRCL Plan*.

California's Children and Students

California's Youngest Children

The number of children under age five in California underscores the importance of implementing the *Early Learning Foundations*; they comprise about 30 percent of California's children (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of California Children Statewide by Age Group, 2009

Under 5	5 to 17	Total
2,749,180	6,685,922	9,435,102
29%	71%	100%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2009

Table 2 provides data regarding the race and ethnicity of children in California who were under age five in 2008. The proportional representation by race or ethnicity of the state's youngest children is consistent with students currently enrolled in California's public schools as reflected in Table 3, except for a slight proportional increase in Hispanic, Asian, and multi-race children and a slight decrease in American Indian and African American children under five years old.

Table 2. Race and Ethnicity of Children Under 5 in California, 2008

White	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	African American	American Indian	Multi-Race	Total
736,037	1,420,289	261,789	8,002	129,698	4,297	194,186	2,754,298
27%	52%	10%	0.4%	5%	0.2%	7%	100%

Source: California Department of Finance, 2010

Assuming that these children will be entering the state's public schools in the next five years, state policymakers must consider ways to provide them the necessary emergent literacy skills to prevent any further widening of the achievement gap and must continue concentrated efforts on narrowing the gap in the future.

Students Kindergarten through Grade Twelve

Over 6.2 million students were enrolled in California's K–12 public schools in the 2010–11 school year, and these students are among the most diverse in the nation (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Public Student Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity,
Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2010–11**

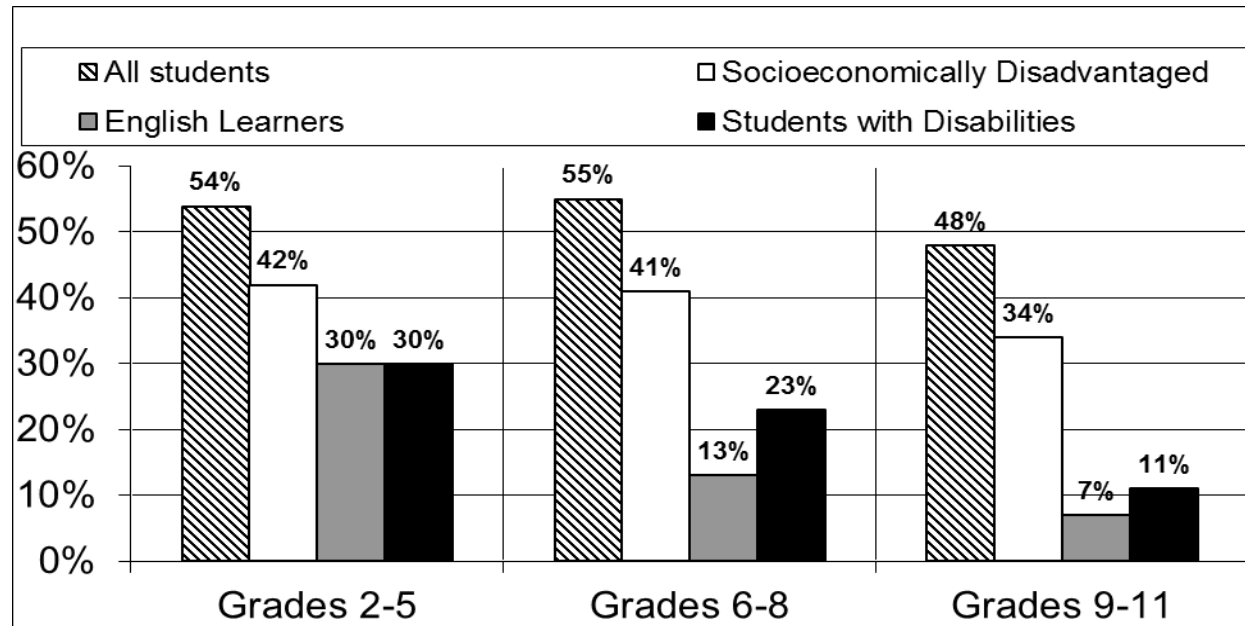
Ethnicity	Number of	Percent of Total
Hispanic or Latino	3,197,490	51.43%
American Indian or Alaska	43,546	0.70%
Asian, Not Hispanic	529,525	8.52%
Pacific Islander	35,807	0.58%
Filipino, Not Hispanic	159,088	2.56%
African American	416,299	6.70%
White, Not Hispanic	1,655,539	26.63%
Two or More Races	112,783	1.81%
None Reported	67,036	1.08%
Total	6,217,113	100.0%

Source: DataQuest, California Department of Education, 2011

The data in Figure 1 indicate that of all students enrolled in California's public schools in 2010, approximately half reached the statewide proficiency targets for ELA in grades two through eleven. The percentages of proficiency of the three

subgroups represented are even lower. Figure 1 also shows that English learners were proportionally among the least proficient among all student subgroups across the grade spans; only 30 percent reached proficiency in ELA in grades two through five, 13 percent demonstrated proficiency in grades six through eight, and 7 percent demonstrated proficiency in grades nine through eleven.

Figure 1. Percent Proficient or Above by Student Subgroup and Grade Span on the *California Standards Test* for English-Language Arts, 2010



Source: California Department of Education
Standardized Testing and Reporting Results, 2010

Students with Disabilities

Over 680,000 students in California from birth through twenty-two years of age received special education services in 2010. This number represents about 10 percent of public school students. The majority of students with disabilities fell into the mild-to-moderate range of disability, including the categories of specific learning disability (287,773), speech or language impairment (168,046), autism (59,690), intellectual disability (42,897), and emotional disturbance (27,314) (CDE Dataquest 2011). All students with disabilities in grades two through eleven take the *California Standards Test (CST)* unless they have an individualized education program (IEP) that allows assessment through the *California Modified Assessment (CMA)* or the *California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA)*. In 2010, 297,567 students with disabilities participated in the *CST*; 132,331 participated in the *CMA*; 13,035 participated in the *CAPA*, Level 1; and 33,186 participated in the *CAPA*, Level II assessments.

As Figure 1 indicates, of the students with disabilities who participated in the 2010 Standardized Assessment and Reporting (STAR) program, 30 percent scored proficient or above in ELA in grades two through five, and the proficiency level declined to 11 percent in grades nine through eleven. Although California's recent, broad-based literacy efforts included a focus on improving the reading abilities of students in kindergarten through grade three, with increased attention to English learners and special education students, the data indicate an achievement gap between special education students and all students. Focused research in special education has noted that reading difficulties have led many students to be classified as having learning disabilities when these labels could have been avoided if students were provided additional time and increased, focused instruction and feedback on fundamental reading skills (CDE 1999).

California's *SRCL Plan* includes support for educators of students with disabilities to provide both specially designed literacy instruction and equitable, universal access to the general education environment and curriculum. Universal access ensures that students with disabilities receive high-quality, research-based instruction that will enable them to successfully learn the content standards. Additional information can be found in the 1999 CDE publication, *California Reading Initiative and Special Education in California: Critical Ideas Focusing on Meaningful Reform* on the California Services for Technical Assistance and Training Web site at http://www.calstat.org/publications/pdfs/ca_reading_initiative.pdf.

English Learners

Twenty-four percent of K–12 students in California, approximately 1.5 million, are English learners, which is more than two-and-a-half times the national average of nine percent (CDE 2011a). In California, data are collected on over 50 of the most common primary languages among English learners. Eighty-five percent of English learners speak Spanish as their first language and these students are also included in the Hispanic subgroup (CDE 2009a). California defines long term English learners as those students in grades six through twelve who have been studying in the U.S. for six or more years, who remain at the same level of English language proficiency for two or more years, and who score far below basic or below basic on the English language arts standards-based achievement test. Almost 60 percent of secondary English learners in California are considered long term, many of them beginning school in the U.S. as kindergarten students (Californians Together 2010). These students are at significant risk of not meeting the academic challenges of higher education and career readiness and/or not graduating from high school.

For these reasons, the *SRCL Plan* places intensive, focused attention on supporting and improving the language and literacy development and achievement of English learners, beginning in early childhood, with an increased focus and change in approach to meet the needs of adolescent students in this subgroup. These approaches include providing accelerated, challenging, and relevant curriculum to motivate and engage students to achieve the goal of attaining proficiency in English and mastery of grade-level academics. Approaches to prepare students with 21st century skills also include developing home languages and biliteracy skills. Building and supporting a firm foundation in the home language can contribute to transfer of skills and increased English language and literacy development.

The SBE-adopted English learner reclassification guidelines recommend that students who meet the *California English Language Development Test (CELDT)* criterion for English proficiency and also perform at the midpoint of Basic or above on the ELA portion of the *CST* (or *CMA*) be eligible to be considered for reclassification. An important distinction to note is that the *CELDT* is a measure of English language proficiency based on the 1999 ELD standards, while the *CST* for ELA measures academic English skills based on the 1997 ELA content standards. This distinction will have ramifications for monitoring the progress of English learners as California transitions to the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*. It is useful to examine the performance of current English learners and former English learners, those reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP), together when monitoring the progress of English learners. When the progress of both current and former English learners is considered together, one can see the results for students who are

receiving English learner services and those who have benefited from those services together, thus creating a more stable subgroup from which to make the comparisons.

Table 4 illustrates the performance of English learners, RFEP students, and students whose primary language is English (English Only) and students who were identified through CELDT results as initially fluent English proficient (IFEP) on the CST for ELA from 2006 through 2010.

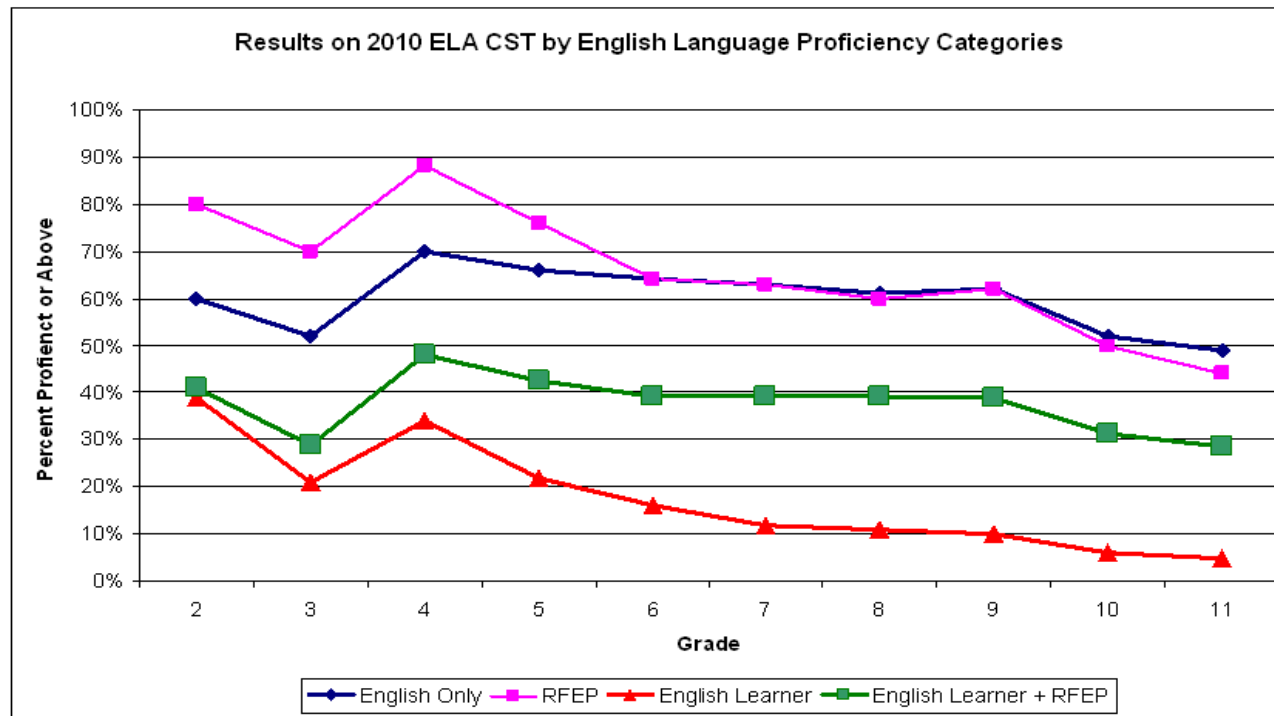
**Table 4: California Standards Test for English-Language Arts:
Percent Proficient and Above for All Students**

Year	English Learner (EL)			Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)			EL and RFEP			English Only and Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP)		
	Percent Proficient	Count	Tested	Percent Proficient	Count	Tested	Percent Proficient	Count	Tested	Percent Proficient	Count	Tested
2010	21.11%	208,230	986,232	61.35%	421,419	686,900	37.63%	629,649	1,673,132	59.78%	1,504,816	2,517,229
2009	20.07%	210,489	1,048,960	58.50%	375,521	641,908	34.66%	586,009	1,690,868	58.07%	1,475,550	2,540,825
2008	16.26%	178,811	1,099,907	55.04%	330,241	599,967	29.95%	509,052	1,699,874	53.65%	1,387,901	2,586,785
2007	14.75%	166,285	1,127,647	51.19%	292,164	570,796	26.99%	458,449	1,698,443	51.65%	1,361,459	2,635,877
2006	13.75%	158,786	1,155,099	49.50%	260,147	525,519	24.93%	418,934	1,680,618	50.47%	1,353,380	2,681,412

**Source: California Department of Education
Standardized Testing and Reporting Results, 2010**

The data in Table 4 indicate that since 2006 English learners, RFEP, and English Only/IFEP students show steady growth in English-language arts; however, when looking more closely at the performance data of these same groups, concerns remain. Figure 2 breaks down the information from Table 4 further by reporting proficiency and above by grade levels for 2010 CST for ELA results.

Figure 2. Results for the *California Standards Test* for English-Language Arts by English Language Proficiency, 2010



**Source: California Department of Education
Standardized Testing and Reporting Results, 2010**

Despite the gains made by all students, a significant achievement gap for English learners is evident from grade two, when students first participate in the *CST*. The number of English learners at the proficient and above levels in ELA steadily decreases from grade four through grade eleven, thus widening the achievement gap as students progress through the grades.

In *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches* (CDE 2010d), Dutro and Kinsella reported on the achievement of English learners: “Statistics regarding English proficiency in grades six through twelve for second-

language learners are dismaying. A significant number of English learners achieve adequate oral fluency for face-to-face communication yet lag dramatically in measures of academic success and tasks requiring academic language proficiency.”

An American Institutes for Research (AIR) study in 2006 looked closely at *CELDT* data and summarized reclassification rates for long-term English learners. AIR found that although English learners advance to the intermediate level of English language development, they tend to remain there rather than advance toward higher levels of English proficiency throughout middle and high school grades. AIR found that reclassification rates overall have increased but the probability of an English learner in California being reclassified after 10 years is less than 50 percent (CDE 2010d).

Table 5 shows the performance of grade ten English learners on the California High School Exit Examination (*CAHSEE*) by number of years in U.S. schools during the 2006 and 2007 school years.

Table 5: Number of Grade Ten English Learners and *CAHSEE* Passing Rates by Number of Years in U.S. Schools

Number of Years in US Schools	English-Language Arts			
	Number Tested		Percent Pass	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
<1	1,032	906	15.1%	16.3%
1	6,310	5,511	22.7%	22.1%
2	8,047	8,111	27.9%	29.5%
3	3,908	3,940	33.1%	31.9%
4	3,771	3,590	38.3%	36.1%
5	3,209	2,991	40.5%	37.1%
6	2,875	2,734	41.4%	39.1%
7	2,365	2,435	41.6%	40.4%
8	2,055	2,015	45.7%	40.0%
9	2,008	1,854	44.3%	38.5%
10	3,805	3,736	44.8%	40.7%
11	27,065	27,162	44.4%	41.8%
>11	11,152	12,293	33.8%	30.7%

Source: Human Resources Research Organization, 2007

In a 2007 study, Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) noted that the majority of California's English learners began school in the United States of America (U.S.) as kindergarten students. The percentage of English learners who passed the *CAHSEE* in grade ten, after 11 years in school in the U.S., was 44.4 percent in 2006 and 41.8 percent in 2007. More than half of English learners tested did not receive a passing score in either year.

As the data in Table 5 illustrate, California must intensify its efforts addressing and meeting the needs of its adolescent English learners, to support the increased achievement as demonstrated through RFEP, rather than dropping out of high

school before graduation due to academic failure. Focus must be placed on strengthening the language development approach used by LEAs, beginning in early childhood and extending through grade twelve and maintaining consistency and coherence across the academic program for all English learners.

African American and Hispanic Students

Table 3 (see page 16), shows that over 50 percent of students enrolled in California's public schools are of Hispanic/Latino origin—the nation's largest ethnic minority and California's ethnic majority. Table 6 indicates that the majority of both African American and Hispanic/Latino students did not achieve proficiency on the *CST* for ELA in 2010. Proportionally, African American students performed least well among all racial/ethnic subgroups.

Table 6. Percent of Students, by Race and Ethnicity, in Grades 2–11 Scoring Proficient or Above on the *California Standards Test* for English-Language Arts, 2010

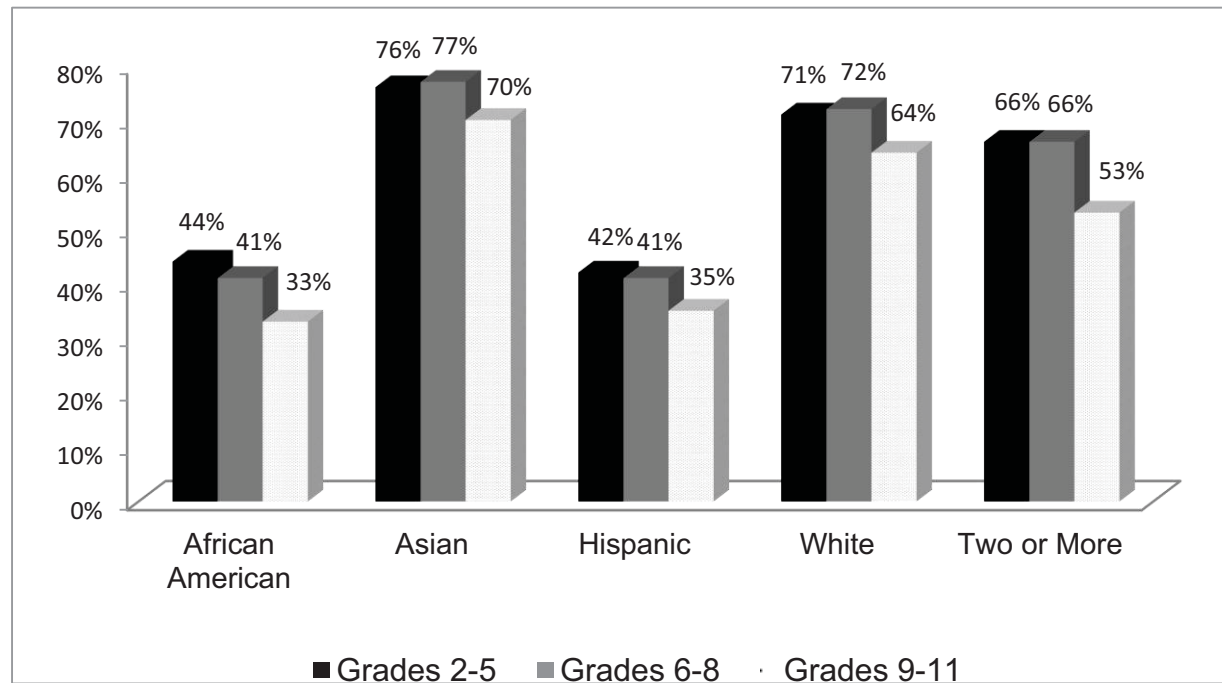
White	Hispanic or Latino	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Filipino	Two or More Races
1,271,688	2,403,612	401,348	25,804	325,933	32,778	124,522	133,490
69%	40%	75%	48%	39%	45%	69%	62%

Source: DataQuest, California Department of Education, 2011.

The data in Figure 3 demonstrate that in 2010, a significantly lower percentage of African American and Hispanic students achieved proficiency on the *CST* for ELA in grades two through five, 44 percent and 42 percent respectively, than their counterparts from Asian, White, and Two or More racial categories (76 percent, 71 percent, and 66 percent respectively). The difference in performance is even more pronounced for middle school and high school students. Specifically, only 41 percent of African American and Hispanic students in middle school achieved proficiency or better in ELA in 2010

compared to 77 percent of Asian, 72 percent of White, and 66 percent of students in the Two or More racial/ethnic categories. Furthermore, only about a third of high school students in the African American and Hispanic subgroups scored proficient or above in ELA in 2010, whereas 70 percent of Asian, 64 percent of White, and 53 percent of students in Two or More racial/ethnic categories did so.

Figure 3. Percent Proficient or Above by Race/Ethnicity and Grade Span on the California Standards Test in English-Language Arts, 2010



**Source: California Department of Education
Standardized Testing and Reporting Results, 2010**

As the data illustrate, California must intensify efforts to identify and address the needs of underserved students in the African American and Hispanic subgroups, many of whom struggle academically if their needs are not met early on. Focus must be placed on strengthening academic language and literacy approaches used by LEAs for limited English

proficient students and the consistency and coherence across the academic program, beginning with the *Early Learning Foundations* and transitioning to the *CCSS for ELA*. This includes increasing attention to meeting the needs of standard-English learners who speak a non-standard variety of English. Furthermore, according to the data in Tables 4 and 6, in 2010, African American students scored significantly lower on the *CST* for ELA than other student subgroup, indicating that further focus is necessary for this subgroup to achieve proficiency in English-language arts.

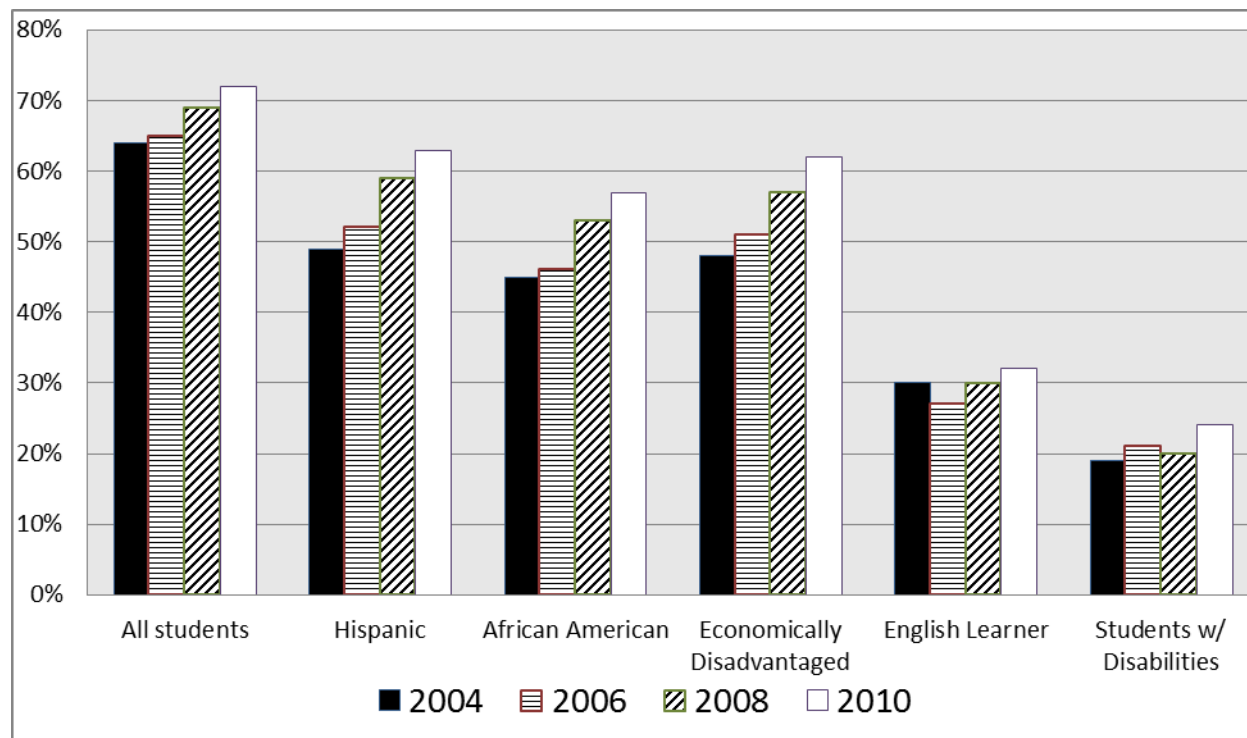
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students

In *A Blueprint for Great Schools*, released by the CDE in 2011 and available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/bp/documents/yr11bp0709.pdf>, there is a reference to James Coleman's *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, a publication that provided the first substantial evidence that student background and socioeconomic status strongly influence academic achievement. Although the relationship between poverty and school success has been understood for a long time, educational reform efforts have not successfully met the basic literacy needs of over half of California's student population: socioeconomically disadvantaged students (CDE 2011a). This subgroup also includes, but is not exclusive of, many students in the racial/ethnic groups previously mentioned. The literacy needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students from all categories are made evident by the data presented in Figure 4, with fewer than 65 percent passing the ELA portion of the *CAHSEE* in grade ten in 2011. Considering that the majority of California's students fall into this subgroup category, increased attention on improving the academic performance of all students, regardless of background, is critical.

Adolescent Learners

The *SRCL Plan* increases focus on the literacy development of adolescent learners. In California, almost one-third of grade nine students drop out before high school graduation (CDE 2011a). For those who remain, many continue to struggle academically throughout high school. Data indicate that significant gaps in passing rates on the *CAHSEE* remain among students with disabilities, English learners, and African American and Hispanic students. Figure 4 includes data from a study that examines the number of grade ten students who scored proficient on the ELA portion of the *CAHSEE* in 2010. Among students with disabilities and English learners, less than a third met the *CAHSEE* requirement in grade ten.

**Figure 4. Percent Passing the *CAHSEE*,
English Language Arts Component, in Grade 10 by Demographic Group and Year**



Source: HumRRO, 2010

Core Components

The California *SRCL Plan*, the state's vision of literacy from birth through grade twelve, responds to the needs of the California's students by offering this guide for educators as they work to improve literacy instruction and practices in their districts and schools and align those to the *CCSS for ELA*. The *SRCL Plan* is organized around seven components that aims to ensure that every child receives instruction and support necessary to achieve proficient to advanced language and literacy skills across academic disciplines.

The following seven components of the *SRCL Plan* are addressed in each of the four major age and grade span sections, (1) Birth through Age Five, (2) Kindergarten through Grade Five, (3) Grade Six through Grade Eight, and (4) Grade Nine through Grade Twelve:

- Standards and Frameworks
- Articulated and Aligned Curriculum
- Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention
- Educator Preparation and Professional Learning
- Engaging Families and Communities
- Assessment and Progress Monitoring
- Accountability

Each grade span section contains a description of each of the components, along with specific goals and objectives that are recommended for each grade span to successfully develop a local literacy plan. There are some common objectives within the grade spans as well as specific objectives.

Birth through Age Five

In order to meet the workforce and societal challenges of the future, California's comprehensive literacy plan emphasizes strong language and literacy support for the state's youngest children, particularly those with the greatest needs, to aid them in transitioning from home to infant and toddler programs, to preschool then kindergarten, and throughout the elementary grades. The first step in meeting this goal is to provide the language and literacy foundation necessary for all children and students to succeed in their K–12 education and aligning this foundation with the K–12 education plan.

California's Urgent Need

California is home to over 3 million children up through age five. At least 41 percent of these children have little or no exposure to English at home, and a growing number of young children in California live in poverty. Based on current trends, at least half of California's youngest children are likely to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch when they enter kindergarten (CAEL QIS 2010b). Furthermore, between 40 and 60 percent of second and third graders in California do not achieve grade-level proficiency standards on ELA and mathematics statewide assessments, and most of these students were lacking necessary school readiness skills and knowledge as far back as kindergarten entry (RAND Corporation 2007). When children enter kindergarten, noticeable differences in language, social, and pre-mathematics skills are evident, and research indicates that the groups of children who start school behind tend to stay behind (CAEL QIS 2010b).

Further exacerbating these problems is the fact that only about 60 percent of eligible children in California attend structured early learning programs, with the lowest participation rates among children from low income families; Hispanic children in particular (Karoly 2009). While many children do not attend early learning and care programs for financial, family, or cultural reasons, some families who seek services have limited or no access to quality programs. For example, federally funded Early Head Start and Head Start programs serve nearly 105,000 children birth to age five in California, but more than 149,000 children under age five remain waiting on county eligibility lists for state-subsidized early learning and care services. Additionally, the number of children waiting includes over 3,000 children with exceptional needs (CAEL QIS 2010b). While this state literacy plan does not specifically address the number of children attending programs in California, it does address the quality and structure of existing early care and preschool programs available to families.

In order to ensure that students are prepared to meet increasing academic challenges throughout their schooling, LEAs must intensify efforts to identify and address the needs of students who struggle, beginning as early as preschool. By creating a love for learning and exposure to many books, local literacy plans strengthen support for language and literacy developments of infants and young children. This includes providing print-rich environments and rich interactions with interesting books and read-alouds, defining strategies for identifying persistently underserved subgroups and implementing research-based literacy instruction to ensure consistency and coherence across the academic program, beginning with the *Early Learning Foundations* and transitioning to the *CCSS for ELA*.

The Research

Growing concerns about the school readiness gap for entering kindergarten students, as well as inconsistencies in the quality of early childcare and learning programs in California, recently initiated a comprehensive and extensive statewide effort to look deeper into the types of care and early learning opportunities that the state's youngest children receive and to develop a system to improve the quality of and access to early learning opportunities. Two studies of primary significance are:

The *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study*: This study, conducted by the University of California at Berkeley in 2006, found that only 29 percent of all licensed early care providers in California held an associate's degree or higher. Among those who had completed an associate's or bachelor's degree, only 34 percent held a degree directly related to early childhood development. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of childcare providers had not completed any coursework in English language development or dual-language learning (Whitebrook, Sakai et al. 2006). This statistic is highly concerning, especially in light of the fact that over 40 percent of children under the age of five in California speak a primary language other than English.

The *California Preschool Study*: Conducted by the Rand Corporation in 2007, this study determined that the majority of center-based and home-based childcare and early learning providers in California almost exclusively focus on and emphasize developmentally appropriate social-emotional support and child engagement activities. These elements are critical to quality early care to facilitate healthy emotional and social development for young children. What the study

found to be overwhelmingly lacking in the majority of early learning programs, however, were appropriate systems of instructional support for learning language and higher-order thinking skills—two elements that are necessary for a child’s early language and literacy development and future academic success. While all aspects of a child’s early learning experience are essential to healthy development, the higher-level language and cognitive skills learned in a child’s earliest years are strongly predictive of performance gains on future cognitive and student achievement assessments (CAEL QIS 2010b).

The study concluded that high-quality early learning experiences and preschool programs are essential for the advancement of school readiness skills and for improving educational achievement and outcomes well into the future. In fact, authors of the study determined that preschool in particular can be part of the solution to narrowing the persistent achievement gap in California’s K–12 educational system.

Increasing provider access to information and research-based strategies to improve the quality of early learning programs for all children is a primary focus of the early learning components of the *SRCL Plan*.

California’s Plan

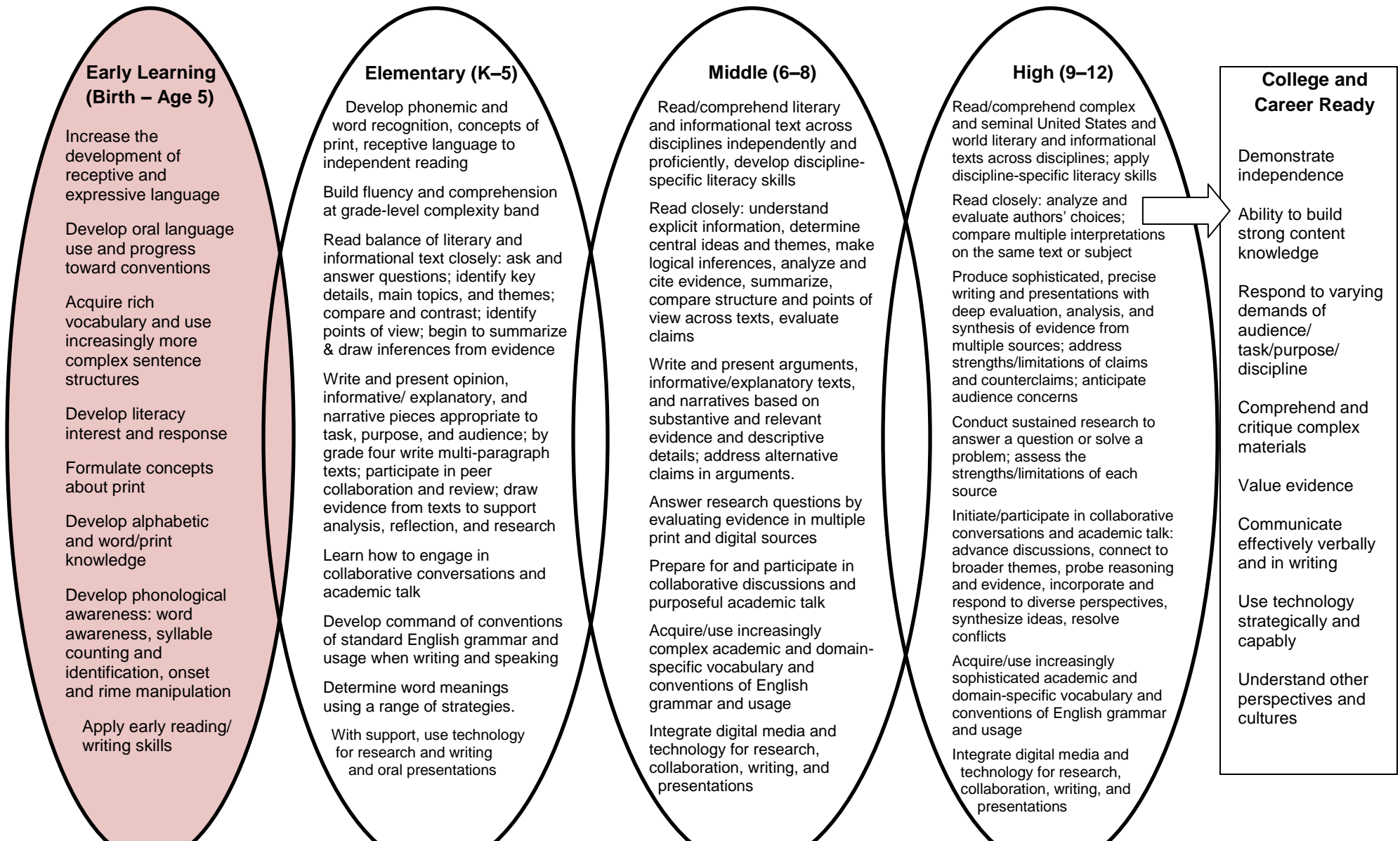
Over the last ten years, California has established itself as a national leader in early learning to better prepare its youngest children for entry into elementary school. Aligning the nationally recognized *Infant and Toddler and Preschool Learning Foundations* (referred to as the *Early Learning Foundations*) with the state’s newly adopted *CCSS for ELA* will provide educators and parents with a comprehensive, seamless approach to public education in California designed to prepare all children to succeed in schooling and in life. The implementation of this comprehensive literacy plan will help to ensure that every child will have the language and literacy skills necessary to succeed in California’s public schools and beyond.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

The Continuum on the following page outlines the key ideas of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *CCSS for ELA*. This illustrates the connection with and articulation between the developmental spans of children and students, birth through grade twelve.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

Building all aspects of language and literacy for college and career readiness: reading, writing, speaking, and listening from birth through grade twelve.



Core Components: Standards and Frameworks; Articulation and Alignment; Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention; Educator Preparation and professional Learning; Engaging Families and Communities; Assessment and Progress Monitoring; Accountability

Component 1. Standards and Frameworks

The *Early Learning Foundations* are at the core of California's early learning initiative and were developed through a collaborative effort between the CDE and leading childhood educators, researchers, advocates, and families. California was the first state to have created English-language-development foundations for preschool children, which is incorporated into the *Early Learning Foundations*. The foundations include:

California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations: Describes research and evidence-based expectations that infants and toddlers typically attain as they make progress in social-emotional, language, cognitive, perceptual, and motor development. Companion resources include:

- ***California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework:*** Supports early childhood educators working in programs serving children birth to age five in implementing high-quality curriculum practices that lead to acquisition of the knowledge and skills described in the *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*.
- ***Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines:*** Presents information about how to provide high-quality early care and education, including recommendations for program policies and day-to-day practices that will improve program services to all infants and toddlers.

California Preschool Learning Foundations: Describes competencies—knowledge and skills—that most children can be expected to exhibit in a high-quality program as they complete their first or second year of preschool. Companion resources include:

- ***California Preschool Curriculum Framework:*** Supports early childhood educators working in programs serving children age three to five in implementing high-quality curriculum practices that lead to acquisition of the knowledge and skills described in the *California Preschool Learning Foundations*.
- ***Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines:*** Helps administrators, teachers, and policy makers identify elements necessary for providing quality programming for children prior to their entry into kindergarten.

Statewide efforts to encourage early care and preschool providers to fully implement the *Early Learning Foundations* are currently underway as California transitions to the *CCSS for ELA*. Full implementation of the foundations will facilitate the use of systematic, research-based approaches to provide children with the higher-level language and cognitive skills that are critical for successful transition to kindergarten. *Early Learning Foundations* resources are available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp>.

Component 2. Articulated and Aligned Curriculum

California's *Early Learning Foundations* describe the knowledge and skills that research indicates children typically acquire from infancy through age five. An effective curriculum is a plan of activities that engages young children, is based on research and developmentally appropriate expectations, and is aligned with state education policy. A strong early learning curriculum, built around the foundations, will describe more specifically what is taught at each developmental stage.

The *California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework* and the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework* support early childhood educators in implementing high-quality curriculum practices that lead to providing young children with the knowledge and skills described in the *Early Learning Foundations*. To maximize school readiness among young children, the preschool curriculum must build upon the infant/toddler curriculum and provide a solid foundation in preparation for kindergarten to ensure a well-constructed and coherent pathway to elementary school. Such articulation will emphasize and support transitions as children grow and learn.

Articulated Curriculum: Systematic, vertical articulation practices among educators in toddler, preschool, and elementary school programs are essential to successfully transition all students into each successive developmental and academic level. To ensure a comprehensive pathway through the grades, a local literacy plan should focus on the entire scope of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *CCSS for ELA* from kindergarten through grade twelve and incorporate strong vertical articulation practices. Early education and elementary school leaders need to provide structural supports that facilitate articulation and collaboration among all infant care givers, preschool providers, and kindergarten through grade three teachers.

In an effort to facilitate transitions, the CDE provides guidance to early learning programs on how to systematically and vertically align curriculum across developmental levels and has recently implemented a transitional kindergarten requirement for all public schools.

Transitional Kindergarten: To build a bridge between early learning and kindergarten, California has established transitional kindergarten for children turning five between September 2 and December 2. Transitional kindergarten is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified, developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum. Transitional kindergarten provides students opportunities to be engaged in learning experiences that allow them to develop socially, cognitively, linguistically, physically, and emotionally while preparing them for academic success in kindergarten and beyond. Therefore, in the transitional kindergarten classroom, special emphasis will be placed on social-emotional development, including self-regulation, language development and early literacy, math, and physical development skills.

Implementing the entire scope of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the associated curriculum frameworks is essential for all early childhood educators who work with infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Furthermore, understanding of the *CCSS for ELA* kindergarten standards among preschool educators is critical to ensure a smooth transition for all children into elementary school. Such vertical articulation practices among educators in early care, preschool, and kindergarten programs are essential to successfully transition all children into each successive developmental and academic level.

Aligned Curriculum: California's *Early Learning Foundations* provide early childhood educators with rich, research-based information that is available for immediate implementation. They are aligned with the federal *Head Start Outcomes Framework*, with the *CCSS for ELA*, and with the California Kindergarten Standards. To document this alignment, the CDE has released *The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Education Resources: California Infant-Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, California Content Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (2012). This publication is available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at the following link: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psalignment.pdf>.

The education community in California may find the publication, *Roadmap to Collaboration: Correlation of the Head Start Framework to the Common Core Standards in Kindergarten* a useful additional reference tool (Source for Learning 2011).

The *Early Learning Foundations* support school leaders and teachers in their efforts to foster the development of all children attending public infant care and preschool programs in California, including dual-language learners and children with disabilities or other special needs. The following language and literacy components, beginning at 48 months of age, are emphasized in the *Preschool Learning Foundations*:

- Language use and conventions.
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Concepts about print
- Phonological awareness
- Alphabetics and word/print recognition
- Comprehension and analysis of age-appropriate text
- Literacy interest and response
- Writing strategies

As implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* proceeds, it is essential that early learning educators understand the essential literacy components stressed in the new kindergarten standards to ensure that all children are prepared for the challenges ahead.

Component 3. Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention

Instruction is defined as the methods and strategies used to teach a curriculum. In a well-articulated system, aligned with foundations and standards, curriculum and instruction together connect children's and students' literacy learning on a balanced continuum from infancy through grade twelve. A rich, child-centered early learning environment where teachers interact responsively with young children to help develop their social-emotional, high-order thinking, and language skills is necessary to ensure that children are prepared for the major developmental and academic transitions that they will encounter in the future. The *Early Learning Foundations* support infant/toddler and preschool programs in an effort to foster the learning and development of all young children in California, including English learners and children with disabilities or other special needs.

California's efforts to improve the quality of developmental enrichment activities and instruction that children experience in their earliest years begins with providing early childhood educators with the best research-based resources such as the *Early Learning Foundations*, available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp>. The *California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework* and the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework* present an integrated approach to planning learning environments, providing comprehensive instruction that focuses on effective, proven interactions, relationships, and strategies to support young children's learning and development. The frameworks specifically address the critical literacy components of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to guide early childhood educators in supporting the process of each child's language development.

When planning literacy activities and instruction, all early learning educators should be familiar with the following concepts, practices, and resources:

Universal Design for Learning: When young children, especially those with disabilities or other special needs, reveal their developmental progress in alternative ways, it is important to provide opportunities for children to follow different pathways to learning. Therefore, the infant/toddler and preschool foundations incorporate a concept known as universal design for learning (CDE 2011d). Universal design refers to providing multiple approaches to learning in order to meet the needs of diverse learners using multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (Center for Applied Special Technology 2011). Multiple means of representation refers to providing information in a

variety of ways so the learning needs of all children are met. Multiple means of expression refers to allowing children to use alternative ways to communicate or demonstrate what they know or what they are feeling.

Eight Overarching Principles: Grounded in early childhood research and practice, the following eight principles emphasize offering young children individually, culturally, and linguistically responsive learning experiences and environments:

1. **Relationships are central.** A climate of caring and respect that promotes nurturing relationships between children and within the community of families supports children's learning in all domains.
2. **Play is a primary context for learning.** Play not only provides the context for critical thinking, building knowledge, being attentive, solving problems, and increasing social skills. It also helps children to integrate their emotional experiences and internalize guidance from their teachers.
3. **Learning is integrated.** When learning experiences build on what children know, each child can integrate new knowledge into what is familiar and interesting. Since children learn using all of their sensory modalities in an integrated way, it is essential to strengthen the modalities with which individual children need special help and build upon their areas of strength.
4. **Intentional teaching enhances children's learning experiences.** Effective early childhood teachers are mindful of children's learning and are intentional or purposeful in their efforts to support it.
5. **Family and community partnerships create meaningful connections.** Getting to know the families and the community give teachers insights into the learning experiences and competencies that children bring to the preschool setting and informs efforts to make preschool meaningful and connected for children.
6. **Individualization of learning includes all children.** Preschool teachers use their understanding of each child's blend of temperament, family and cultural experiences, language experiences, personal strengths, interests, abilities, and disposition to support the child's learning and development.

7. **Responsiveness to culture and language supports children's learning.** An essential part of being culturally and linguistically responsive is to value and support each child's use of home language, as continued use and development of the child's home language will benefit the child as he or she acquires English.
8. **Time for reflection and planning enhances teaching.** Curriculum planning requires time for teachers to reflect on children's learning and plan strategies that foster children's progress in building knowledge and mastering skills.

Language and Literacy needs of special populations: The use of multiple strategies is required to meet the needs of children with disabilities, English learners, children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged children, and children with combinations of special needs (CDE 2011e). Early childhood educators should be familiar with the needs of special populations and understand and use research-based practices to address those needs.

Socioeconomically disadvantaged: Children who live in low-income households may face learning challenges that must be addressed at their earliest stages. Children facing severe economic hardship may have nutritional concerns, inconsistent or inadequate housing arrangements, parents or guardians who have limited literacy skills, and other outside influences that may significantly affect school performance. Socioeconomically disadvantaged children cross all racial and ethnic groups and may also be English learners or children with disabilities.

Early childhood educators should be knowledgeable about the unique needs of all children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and should also seek resources and information to understand and provide high-quality care and instruction to children belonging to the predominant racial and ethnic groups in their local areas. Children's learning supports and experiences outside of school should be considered if their growth and development is affected by these factors, and additional supports should be promptly implemented when necessary.

Children with disabilities: An essential next step for California's early childhood educators is to ensure more accurate identification and referral of children who need special services, and the process should always include evidence of a child's lack of positive response to high-quality instruction in the general program. Early childhood

educators working with children with special needs should utilize structured and research-based methods to teach language and literacy and should also be knowledgeable of best-practice teaching strategies for English learners with special needs. LEA literacy plans should emphasize strong collaboration between early learning educators and community organizations serving special needs children, as well as English-learner specialists, reading specialists, and literacy coaches of the local school district to adequately address the language and literacy needs of all children with disabilities. Essential resources for early learning educators who work with children with disabilities include:

Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs: Aligned with the *Early Learning Foundations* and the early learning frameworks, *Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs* offers guidance and resources on specific ways to include young children who have disabilities or special needs. Suggestions for ways to adapt the environment are provided, along with examples of inclusive strategies. A glossary and appendixes make this handbook a practical tool for care providers. This 2009 publication is available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/inclusionworks.pdf>.

California Map to Inclusion and Belonging: The California Making Access Possible (MAP) project supports the inclusion of children with disabilities and other special needs ages birth to 21 in child care, after school, and community settings. The project operates under the Center for Child and Family Studies at WestEd and is funded by the CDE's Child Development Division with a portion of the federal Child Care Development Fund Quality Improvement Allocation. Information about the MAP project and additional resources are available at the California MAP to Inclusion and Belonging Web site at <http://www.cainclusivechildcare.org/camap/inclusionworks.html>.

Dual-language learners: Early learning programs should incorporate research-based guidelines for teachers working with young children who are simultaneously learning their home language and English. It is essential that early learning educators stay current with ongoing research in the field in order to meet the needs of young dual-language learners and prepare them to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Early learning educators are encouraged to promote biliteracy and multiculturalism and maintain a culturally responsive approach during

interactions with children and their families, tapping into children's background knowledge to guide and enhance instruction. An essential resource for early learning educators who work with bilingual children is:

Preschool English Learners Resource Guide: The CDE publication, *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning*, aligned with the *Early Learning Foundations* and the frameworks, helps early educators understand the unique needs of the preschool English learner. The guide provides information about the development, abilities, and everyday experiences of the preschool English learner, as well as best-practice instructional strategies, and is based on current, rigorously conducted research. Preschool dual-language learners are learning two languages and require more specialized support than their English speaking peers. The widespread use of this resource will ensure that these young children are provided with literacy instruction that will increase the likelihood of language acquisition success and kindergarten readiness. This 2009 publication is available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf>.

Children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: Culture shapes a person's beliefs, values, and morals. In the United States, the education system has historically deculturalized Native American, African American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican students as well as students from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia (Gay 2010). Culturally responsive teaching means developing an instructional environment for students that validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires, and motivates learning.

Culturally responsive instructional elements include:

- Standards-based teaching with culturally responsive literature
- Systematic teaching of situational appropriateness
- Building on cultural behaviors to create positive classroom communities
- Expansion of academic vocabulary instruction using conceptually coded words

- Creating an inviting learning environment for student success, purposeful use of texts that affirm and validate the backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences of the students
- Building an understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of Standard English as differentiated from the home language
- Providing an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment

Most importantly, although students may not come from the same cultural or linguistic background as the teacher that difference does not mean the students have fewer abilities. Coming to school with different cultural and background references, having different interests, learning differently, and/or processing information in multiple ways are traits possessed by all children. By being more reflective and understanding students' diverse cultural backgrounds, linguistic needs, and learning styles educators can become more aware of how they teach, how students learn, and how to increase their own instructional effectiveness for teaching all students (Terry and Irving 2010).

Technology Integration: Staff use of meaningful technology integration in infant/toddler care centers and preschools in order to document learning is entirely appropriate for 21st century early childhood programs, if used to target specific areas of learning and development on a limited basis and if informed by research-based, best-practice methods. While not appropriate for learning activities for infants and toddlers, technological tools can be a supportive element, for child-centered and play-based early childhood instructional practices (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008).

Home-based Child Care: The following resource provides home care providers with high-quality childcare guidelines.

Guidelines for Early Learning in Child Care Home Settings: An adaptation of the *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines*, this publication provides guidance to help home-based child care providers offer high-quality early care and learning experiences to the children and families they serve. This 2010 publication is available on the CDE Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/elguidelineshome.pdf>.

Component 4. Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

Widespread dissemination of resources such as the *Early Learning Foundations* and the companion publications are not sufficient to ensure higher quality early care and learning outcomes. Early childhood educators need to be better prepared and informed regarding the *CCSS for ELA*, the *Early Learning Foundations*, and the research and best practices in language and literacy learning and development. Early childhood education also needs improved alignment and coordination between center-based and home-based child care providers. In addition, those involved in preparing early childhood education teachers and leaders across certificate and credentialing areas must have knowledge and a clear understanding of the *CCSS for ELA* for kindergarten through grade five, state curriculum frameworks, assessment tools in language and literacy, and state policy. Educator preparation and professional learning must include specific strategies for helping students with disabilities, dual-language learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged children make the critical transition to kindergarten.

A system of improved early childhood educator preparation programs, aligned with the new state standards, and ongoing professional learning is essential and currently underway statewide. California's *Early Learning and Development System* is a web of state and local entities that incorporates the *Early Learning Foundations* and companion resources, early learning assessment instruments, and professional learning (CDE 2010h). The *Early Learning and Development System* incorporates enhanced permit requirements and intensified professional learning that emphasize research-based strategies and instructional practices to meet the individual needs of all children.

Additional information is available on the WestEd Web site at:

http://www.wested.org/desiredresults/training/training_pages/tutorial_files/Early%20Learning%20and%20Development%20System/player.html.

At the heart of any professional learning plan is strong and cohesive leadership. To successfully implement the *Early Learning Foundations* and increase achievement, early childhood education leaders must ensure active participation of teachers in ongoing professional learning to stay informed of current research and best practices in instruction and assessment. To ensure effectiveness, professional learning should become a system-wide priority—not simply a strategy for individual growth (Learning Forward 2011). Key to the success of any professional learning initiative is a system based on research, collaboration, learning resources, and access to high quality learning opportunities on an ongoing

basis.

Educator Preparation: Research strongly suggests that formal higher education with a specific focus on early childhood care and education leads to more effective care and teaching of young children (Whitebrook, Sakai et al. 2006). Currently, the CDE and child development community are working to streamline teacher preparation guidelines and collaborating with institutions of higher education as follows:

California Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies: Developed in collaboration with First 5 California and advisors from higher education, the *ECE Competencies* are based on current research and practice and are available on the CDE California Child Development Publications Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp>. Aligned with the *Early Learning Foundations*, the competencies inform teacher preparation by providing guidance on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that early childhood educators need to provide high-quality care and education to young children. The core competencies include topics such as child development and learning; culture, diversity, and equity; dual-language learning; family and community; health, safety, and nutrition; leadership in early childhood education; learning environments and curriculum; observation, assessment, screening, and documentation; positive interactions and guidance; professionalism; and special needs and inclusion (CDE and First 5 California 2011). These new competencies provide a coherent structure for professional learning and teacher and administrator preparation as they inform a course of study and provide guidance in defining ECE credentials and certifications. There is a need to ensure an increase in the dissemination and use of the *ECE Competencies* as a next step in creating a well-designed, coordinated approach to preparing early childhood educators.

Faculty Initiative Project: The CDE continues its efforts to infuse pre-service content from the *Early Learning Foundations* and the companion resources in college and university teacher preparation programs through this collaboration with higher education. The project focuses on aligning and integrating essential content and competencies of key resources and initiatives with core early childhood education curricula of the California Community College and the California State University systems. Faculty has access to information and resources to integrate content of the CDE initiatives and publications into unit-bearing coursework required to attain college certificates, permits granted by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and campus graduation requirements.

Professional Learning: At the core of any professional learning plan is strong and cohesive leadership. California is currently in the process of reforming its early learning licensing and credentialing requirements and is participating in nationwide collaborations such as the Faculty Initiative Project to ensure that early learning leaders are prepared for the challenges of preparing young children for 21st century education and learning.

Additionally, efforts continue at the state and county levels to ensure that local agencies disseminate information and provide ongoing training for all early childhood educators. Continued support is being provided to guide implementation of the *Early Learning Foundations* and improve instructional practices. California's early childhood education professional learning system is built upon the *ECE Competencies* for all early learning and care providers, including supervisors and administrators. In addition, the following professional learning resources are available:

Standards for Professional Learning: Outlines research-based principles and practices proven to improve teaching and learning outcomes (Learning Forward 2011).

Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC): A responsive, relationship-based approach to creating and providing an individualized curriculum for infants and toddlers. PITC provides a framework for training caregivers in the concept that tender, loving, culturally responsive care and attention to the child's interests, curiosity, and motivation form the foundation for learning (PITC 2011).

California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN): Provides ongoing professional learning and technical assistance to preschool teachers and administrators to help ensure that preschool children are ready for school. The network is organized into eleven regions to disseminate information, training, and resources to early childhood programs throughout the state (CPIN 2010).

Expanded Learning: The *SRCL Plan* emphasizes the continuum of learning that occurs from birth through grade twelve. To effectively address this continuum, early childhood educators should be trained in the following additional areas:

- Transitions from infant/toddler care to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten and the connection of the *Early Learning Foundations* to the *CCSS for ELA*.
- Organization of intervention processes using a multi-tiered approach to meet the diverse needs of all children.
- Strategies for giving support to dual-language learners and increasing cultural sensitivity.
- Conducting family outreach activities to communicate and collaborate about ways to support language and literacy learning and development.

Measuring Learning Outcomes: Ongoing measurements of educator learning, including evaluations and observational activities, to measure understanding and the use of learned strategies, are essential to ensure that preparation and professional learning objectives are met, with additional training provided, as needed.

Educator Collaboration: As emphasized throughout this plan, educator collaboration is a necessary element to any successful literacy plan. Multiple opportunities exist for increased staff collaboration on literacy efforts, and professional learning on this topic is highly recommended for early-learning educators as they formulate local literacy plans. In addition, educators can participate in ongoing collaboration and peer learning through social networks, education blogs, and statewide initiatives. Increased communication across early childhood and elementary education, and increased articulation across the age spans, will be vital to the success of California's statewide literacy efforts.

Component 5. Engaging Families and Communities

California is poised to implement a connected, comprehensive system of literacy foundations and standards from infancy through grade twelve that includes families and communities as strong partners. Using the standards, foundations, and strong partnerships, instruction will more effectively address the needs of all children, including those children who are historically underperforming, such as students with disabilities, dual-language learners, and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Improved communication and collaboration with families are key to the success of the *SRCL Plan*.

Family Involvement and Support: Involving families as partners in the early literacy development of young children is an integral part of a seamless support system. To fully support a comprehensive, articulated, and aligned system, families must become aware of the expectations that will be required of their children as they move through the K–12 system. Well in advance, families need to become familiar with the rigor that their children will experience upon entering kindergarten, and families must be provided with multiple opportunities to become active partners in their children’s early literacy development. Active family involvement, along with effective outreach and parent education opportunities, are essential to increase school readiness skills among young children. Early educators can help parents gain the skills needed to become full partners in the education of their young children by:

- Creating a welcoming environment at school to encourage family involvement as partners in learning.
- Informing families of learning goals and objectives and establishing reciprocal relationships through home visits, school activities, and conferences.
- Communicating regularly with families, in English and the home language as needed, regarding children’s progress in meeting benchmarks for the *Early Learning Foundations*.
- Informing families in a timely fashion of their children’s language and literacy progress, types of assessment administered, and the results of those assessments.
- Actively encouraging family involvement in literacy activities at home.
- Providing services in culturally and linguistically responsive manners.
- Utilizing multiple mediums for communication, including technology, and provide alternative means if family does not have access to technology.
- Encouraging and supporting literacy in a child’s first language (if other than English) to provide a foundation for dual-language learning and to promote biliteracy.
- Establishing ongoing communication between educational staff and families of children to assist with infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten transitions.

Community Involvement and Support: Multiple opportunities exist for early childhood educators to reach out to community organizations for support and collaboration. Primarily, providers should maintain contact with the elementary schools that their young students will likely attend and establish mutual goals and support as a feeder program. Additional community partners include grant makers that invest in themed educational projects; professional organizations and collaborative projects; community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, adult and parent education programs; and other local supporters of child development, literacy, and learning.

To increase community involvement and collaboration, early educators should:

- Increase collaborative efforts between infant care providers, preschool, and early elementary educators to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions.
- Seek public, private, foundation, or corporate grants for literacy program support from organizations with similar interests and goals.
- Increase familiarity and involvement with professional organizations such as the Faculty Initiative Project, the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL/QUIS), the California Preschool Instruction Network (CPIN).
- Increase collaborative efforts with community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, and adult and parent education centers.

Whether early childhood education professionals organize group activities and projects or simply extend information regarding events and services to families, working with community partners is an essential element to a cohesive system of literacy support for young children.

Component 6. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs began requiring states to report on the following child outcomes: positive social/emotional development, acquisition of knowledge (including language and literacy), and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs, for children participating in state early

intervention and preschool special education programs. These data have been produced and collected as required, but there continues to be a need to more effectively use data to inform instruction and monitor progress for individual children.

California's early learning assessment system was developed through a collaborative effort between the CDE Child Development Division, the University of California Berkeley, and the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies. The effort produced the *Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) © Assessment System* and is available at no cost on the WestEd Web site at http://www.wested.org/desiredresults/training/form_drdp.htm. The system includes the following assessments for children from infancy through kindergarten:

Desired Results Developmental Profile - Infant/Toddler (DRDP-IT): Designed for early childhood educators to observe, document, and reflect on the learning, development, and progress of infants and toddlers in four domain areas including self and social development, language and literacy, motor and perceptual, and cognitive development.

Desired Results Development Profile - Preschool (DRDP-PS): Measures preschool age children's progress in the development of language and literacy (as well as cognitive, mathematical skills, self and social development and health and physical development) and includes assessment of comprehension of meaning; expression of self through language; language in conversation; interest in literacy; concepts about print, letter, and word knowledge; and phonological awareness. For children who are dual-language learners there is also an assessment scale to support English language development.

Desired Results Development Profile - School Readiness (DRDP-SR): *DRDP-SR* provides kindergarten teachers with valid and reliable psychometric measurements of children's development in key domains of school readiness. The school readiness desired results for children encompass four developmental domains: cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical development, which are reflected and integrated throughout the assessment instruments (2010c). The assessment tools, along with other resources, assist early learning educators with documenting children's progress and planning activities and individual and small group instruction. *DRDP* assessment results are intended to be used by the early learning educator to plan curriculum for individual children and groups of children and to guide continuous program improvement (CDE 2010c). Additional information is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/desiredresults.asp>.

The desired results system is coordinated with a concurrent project, the *Desired Results: Access for Children with*

Disabilities Project, a collaborative effort through the CDE's Special Education Division and Napa County Office of Education. The *DRDP Access Instrument* is an assessment tool that is used for children with special needs, and the accompanying user's guide provides assistance to educators in the appropriate administration of the assessment.

Locally, additional assessments may be used to screen and diagnose difficulties in reading and literacy, check for understanding, and monitor developmental and academic progress. Early learning educators should also be sensitive to the language proficiency levels of dual-language learners in their home language and English. Many of California's preschool dual-language learners use both their home and English languages to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Uses of Assessment Data: For educators to use student assessment data effectively to guide instruction, they need to understand the types and purposes of assessments and know how to analyze and use the data to plan their instruction to meet individual children's needs. Of primary importance is the ability among early educators to establish ongoing collaboration between administrators and teachers to collect, analyze, and use assessment data to inform instruction and to create horizontal articulation and collaboration between developmental levels to analyze data and identify children's strengths and weaknesses.

Component 7. Accountability

On December 16, 2011, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the winners of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC). California has been awarded \$52.6 million in federal grant funds to support more efficient and effective early learning systems through public-private partnerships. The grant spans four years, beginning in January 2012.

Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS): California's RTT-ELC grant application proposes a unique approach that supports a voluntary network of Regional Leadership Consortia (Consortia), each led by an established program that is already developing a QRIS. As part of this grant, the Consortia would expand their current areas of impact by inviting other programs to join their quality rating system or reaching out to mentor peer organizations in surrounding areas. The Consortia will receive approximately 74 percent of the full grant amount. The Consortia will utilize a common "Quality Continuum Framework" to develop and operate local QRIS. The Consortia will voluntarily agree to

set local goals to improve quality of early childhood education programs that include specified common elements in a local quality rating system. The focus will be in three areas of program quality:

1. Child development and readiness for school;
2. Teachers and teaching; and
3. Program and environment quality.

Child Care and Development Fund: On the federal level, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a program specifically dedicated to childcare services and quality nationwide (USHHS 2011). An aggregate of several funding sources, the fund provides block grants to states and territories for the provision of child care services. The majority of the funds are used to provide childcare services to families who meet certain income and need criteria and a portion of the funding is used for activities to improve the quality of child care. The purpose of the CCDF is to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services. Every two years, states and territories receiving CCDF funds must prepare and submit to the federal government a plan detailing how these funds will be allocated and expended.

California's vision of an early learning and care infrastructure includes high program standards and policies, financial incentives for highly rated programs, timely and useful early learning resources, expanded workforce development, increased family and community involvement and education, and enhanced data systems. The collection of data for accountability purposes needs to be expanded to integrate the use of data and technology into progress monitoring and instructional practices. Early care and early learning providers need to better incorporate and maintain electronic data tracking systems, communicate observational progress data to families of all children, and use it for peer collaboration and data analysis. Observational progress monitoring data should be used to inform instructional and remediation decisions, utilize alternate or modified measurements and accommodations as needed, and improve practices and learning outcomes.

Goals and Objectives: Birth through Age Five

The following goals and objectives are provided as guidance to assist local educational agencies in developing local literacy plans:

Component: Standards and Frameworks
Goal: Implement and align the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i> to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> for the early grades.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and implement the key indicators in the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i> that relate to future success in literacy• Ensure that administrators and early childhood educators know and understand the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>, curriculum frameworks, and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> for kindergarten and grade one and apply this knowledge to support and guide early childhood care and instruction• Increase use of the CDE publication <i>The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Education Resources</i> (the Alignment Document) to help guide ways to create smoother transitions between preschool and transitional kindergarten or between preschool and kindergarten

Resources:

California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/itf09intro.asp>

The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psalignment.asp>

CCSS for ELA and Literacy Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/elaliteracyresources.asp>

Goals and Objectives: Birth through Age Five (Cont.)

Component: Articulated and Aligned Curriculum
Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of curriculum, based on the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i> and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> , that aligns to the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from birth through grade twelve, to ensure that each student is college and career ready.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and align <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>, Curriculum Frameworks, the Alignment Document, the <i>Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)</i>, and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> for kindergarten and grade one• Collaborate with kindergarten and other early elementary educators to research and review possible instructional materials adoption for pre-kindergarten and transitional kindergarten programs in English and the home language, as needed• Provide regular opportunities for collaboration on instruction and curriculum between early childhood and elementary educators• Establish vertical articulation practices among educators in early care and education programs to successfully transition all children, especially from home to early care and education programs, and preschool to kindergarten• Identify and utilize technology at every level to supplement curricula, monitor progress, and provide universal access for all children• Identify and utilize technology that is developmentally appropriate and ensure that teachers, teacher librarians, and public librarians can use and assist children in accessing current technology that aligns with the curriculum

Resources:

Desired Results Developmental Profile: <http://www.desiredresults.us/>

Early Learning Foundations and Frameworks: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp>

Grade Level Curriculum: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp>

Review Head Start - Common Core Correlation Project: <http://www.sourceforlearning.org/news.cfm?newsid=68>

Birth through Age Five: Goals and Objectives (Cont.)

Component: Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention
Goal: Provide a system of effective first instruction and learning and provide a tiered system of effective initial instruction and intervention when indicated.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand and use the eight overarching principles as outlined in the <i>SRCL Plan</i> when designing instruction for children• Provide language and print-rich early care and education environments• Provide systemic instructional support in language, early reading, and early writing skills for all children• Provide multiple opportunities for children to be engaged with rich literature and informational books through read-aloud and shared reading• Utilize libraries and other resources to ensure children's engagement with high quality literature and informational text• Build upon the research to establish an instructional plan for developmentally appropriate language development in English• Provide direct, explicit instruction for early language and literacy development• Identify and implement an appropriate tiered approach to instruction as it applies to children ages three to five• Plan and implement instruction, based on data from the <i>DRDP</i>• Use data to identify urgent needs of individual students—especially underserved populations—and design instruction to address their needs• Use technology to engage and motivate children and as a tool for teachers to use for instructional delivery and communication

Resources:

Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning: A Resource Guide

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf>

Desired Results Developmental Profile: <http://www.desiredresults.us/>

California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN): <http://www.cpin.us/>

Meaningful Technology Integration in Early Learning Environments: <http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200809/pdf/OnOurMinds.pdf>

Birth through Age Five: Goals and Objectives (Cont.)

Component: Educator Preparation and Professional Learning
Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of professional learning that addresses the continuum of language and literacy development from infancy through grade twelve and ensures that each student is college and career ready.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide pre-service and in-service professional learning based on the <i>ECE Competencies</i> and ensure high-quality, ongoing professional learning and support to guide the implementation of the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i> and <i>Preschool Curriculum Frameworks</i>• Embed early language and literacy research and best practices into early education professional learning programs to meet the language development and emergent literacy needs of children both at home and in school, including struggling emergent readers, underserved African American and Hispanic children, children with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged children, dual-language learners, and children with highly developed language and emergent literacy• Provide training for early care and education administrators and teachers, including an explanation of the various preschool as well as K–12 program models for dual-language learners• Identify a range of options in preparation programs for early education teachers and administrators• Increase communication and understanding across early education and K–12 educators• Use technology to increase teacher effectiveness, inspire learning, and promote creativity. Establish central hubs for literacy-based instructional and professional learning resources, including community-sharing sites to exchange lesson planning materials and research-based resources

Resources:

Early Childhood Educator Competencies: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp>

Publications: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/chsscopubs.asp>

Faculty Initiative Project: <http://www.wested.org/facultyinitiative/>

Birth through Age Five: Goals and Objectives (Cont.)

Component: Engaging Families and Communities
Goal: Ensure multiple opportunities for all families (regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender) to be actively involved and engaged in their children's education.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasize partnerships in learning, encourage active participation at home and at school, and create a welcoming school environment to encourage family involvement• Inform families of learning goals, objectives, and assessments and encourage family involvement in literacy activities at home• Communicate regularly with families in English and the home language, as needed, regarding expectations, processes, program changes, and children's' progress in meeting benchmarks of the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>• Engage and involve families as active participants in the implementation of a program of instruction based on current and confirmed research aligned to the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>• Build partnerships with families to promote children's development of language and early literacy skills, including strategies for: (1) providing information to families in English and the home language, as needed, and involving families in decision making; (2) developing reciprocal relationships in which both families and educators share information through home visits, family involvement activities, and conferences; and (3) providing opportunities for family engagement in reading and other literacy activities with their children• Encourage and support literacy in a child's first language to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy• Provide online resources for families and offer support to ensure that they have access to and understand email and Internet sources• Maintain ongoing communication with families to assist with infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten transitions• Offer families assistance in supporting children's' language and literacy goals, including the importance of using academic vocabulary in the home and long term college and career readiness• Provide opportunities for families to observe the use of technology within preschool settings and provide alternative means of communication if family does not have access to technology

Resources:

Care About Quality: Your Guide to Child Care: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/caqintro.asp>

Birth through Age Five: Goals and Objectives (Cont.)

Component: Assessment and Progress Monitoring
Goal: Provide a timely and efficient system that includes screening, diagnosis, formative and summative assessments of language development and literacy needs to inform instruction and provide comprehensive support for each child/student at the district and site level. Implement effective use of technology for progress monitoring and data tracking.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly monitor children's progress and provide instruction based on children's strengths and identified needs• Use online <i>DRDP</i> assessment data systems to guide instruction and ensure progress on the development of <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>• Integrate the use of online data collection programs for analyzing DRDP data and to plan curriculum and learning environments• Provide professional learning for teachers and administrators to understand early language and literacy development assessments for dual-language learners and the timely use of data to inform instruction• Inform families in a timely fashion of their children's ongoing language and literacy progress and the types of assessment(s) used to monitor progress with each child• Identify and utilize technology at every level to assist with the analysis and monitoring of children's progress

Resources:

Desired Results Developmental Profile: www.desiredresults.us/

Birth through Age Five: Goals and Objectives (Cont.)

Component: Accountability
Goal: Develop accountability systems that ensure children's needs are met and that all stakeholders understand the progress and literacy achievement of children.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate the use of online data collection programs for analyzing <i>DRDP</i> data and to plan curriculum and learning environments• Identify and utilize technology at every level to monitor children's progress and ensure accountability to parents and all stakeholders

Resources:

Desired Results Developmental Profile: www.desiredresults.us/

Kindergarten through Grade Five

As an integral part of California's comprehensive literacy plan, this section of the plan emphasizes strong language development and literacy support for students transitioning from preschool to kindergarten and throughout the elementary grades, particularly for children who struggle with reading and writing. The first step in meeting this goal is to assist LEAs with their efforts to provide high-quality language and literacy support and to strengthen the state's schools by emphasizing the 21st century skills, including creativity and critical thinking, necessary for all students to succeed in K–12 education, college, and career, as articulated in the *CCSS for ELA*. The multi-literacies required in the 21st century include technology literacy, the ability to understand multiple perspectives and cultures, and the ability to communicate through multiple languages in a global society.

California's Urgent Need

In recent years, intensified and consistent efforts of California educators have resulted in increased overall achievement gains on statewide assessments in ELA across all grades and subgroups of students in the elementary grades. However, many of California's students in elementary grades still struggle with reading—and efforts to meet the needs of these students must not only continue, but increase in intensity. In the face of extreme budgetary constraints, meeting the literacy needs of widely diverse populations of students poses increasing educational challenges to the public school system.

As noted in the previous background section on California's children and students, more than half of students enrolled in California public schools are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and one in four children entering kindergarten speak a primary language other than English. Large numbers of children entering kindergarten have little or no preschool experience, resulting in a range of school readiness skills. Beginning in grade two, the initial grade level for statewide assessment in California, data indicate that large numbers of socioeconomically disadvantaged, African American students, and Hispanic students are still not meeting statewide proficiency targets for ELA. Students with disabilities are consistently the lowest performing subgroup of students. These achievement disparities grow wider as students advance through the grades.

The *CCSS for ELA* require increased focus on strengthening overall academic literacy approaches used by LEAs during the elementary school years for all students, especially those who struggle with reading and writing. Research shows that more can be done to improve reading and writing achievement for all struggling students, including students with disabilities, by implementing school wide efforts aimed at providing strong literacy support that includes research-based reading instruction by teachers specifically trained to do so (CDE 2007). Local literacy plans should define strategies for identifying persistently underserved subgroups of students to ensure consistency and coherence across the academic program.

The Research

Learning to read is the most important skill that students develop during their early academic years, and converging evidence reveals that the kindergarten through grade three span is the optimal period of time for learning the foundational skills needed for later academic, social, and economic success (CDE 2007). Literacy is the key to becoming an independent learner in all the other disciplines. The advanced skills of comprehending narrative and informational text, conducting literary response and analysis, and creating eloquent prose all depend on solid vocabulary, decoding, and word-recognition skills fostered in the early grades and sustained throughout the school years (CDE 2007).

Focused research in special education has noted that many elementary students who struggle with reading are mistakenly classified as having learning disabilities when, in fact, these students may instead need more intensive, systematic teaching, practice, and feedback on fundamental reading skills (CDE 1999). To avoid misidentifying students and to more effectively meet the needs of all students in the early grades, local literacy plans should build upon research-based best practices for reading instruction, assessment, and intervention with a focus on identifying and addressing the needs of struggling readers (Center for Exceptional Children 2007).

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences published a series of practice guides for educators. The guides, developed by What Works Clearinghouse, provide recommendations for instructional practices that were implemented in past research and led to positive effects on student outcomes. The practice guide *Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* is based on a fundamental assumption that the objective of reading instruction is to give young readers the tools they need to understand increasingly sophisticated material in all subjects from elementary through grade twelve (U.S. Department of Education 2010b). The practices recommended in

this guide are therefore not an end in themselves, but the means to developing sound ability in reading comprehension. Instructional recommendations include:

- Teaching students how to use reading comprehension strategies
- Teaching students to identify and use the text's organizational structure to comprehend, learn, and remember content
- Guiding students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text
- Selecting texts purposefully to support comprehension development
- Establishing an engaging and motivating context in which to teach reading comprehension

To effectively incorporate these practices, LEAs should emphasize the use of the recommended practices among all elementary educators. A strong local literacy plan, effective leadership, building teacher capacity through professional learning communities, highly-qualified team members, and increased focus on the urgency of preparing elementary students for the higher grades will lead to stronger academic literacy skills among all students.

California's Plan

In recent years, funding for California schools has been reduced dramatically, yet achievement levels on statewide assessments for all subgroups of students continue to rise when compared to previous years. Further, California has established itself as a national leader in early learning to better prepare its youngest children for entry into elementary school and was the first state to incorporate an ELD component into its preschool foundations. Efforts are underway to fully align the *Early Learning Foundations* with the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards* to ensure successful transitions from preschool to elementary school. California is also a national leader in research and educational advances in the fields of English learner instruction and the Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtI²) approach and is also home to many well-known researchers who serve on statewide advisory panels.

The 2011 publication of California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* provides a foundation for the establishment of a state-of-the-art 21st Century K–12 learning system. There is a wealth of research on sound strategies that hold great promise for students and schools—including many that have already proven effective in California (CDE 2011a). California employs many expert practitioners, high-quality teachers, outstanding educator preparation and professional learning programs, and supportive families and communities that can be leveraged to improve reading and writing instruction on a broad scale. California leadership is forging a more united agenda among the Governor's Office, the SBE, the CDE, and practicing educators to succeed in the critically important work ahead.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

The Continuum on the following page outlines the key ideas of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *CCSS for ELA*. This illustrates the connection with and articulation between the developmental spans of children and students, birth through grade twelve.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

Building all aspects of language and literacy for college and career readiness: reading, writing, speaking, and listening from birth through grade twelve.

Early Learning (Birth – Age 5)

- Increase the development of receptive and expressive language
- Develop oral language use and progress toward conventions
- Acquire rich vocabulary and use increasingly more complex sentence structures
- Develop literacy interest and response
- Formulate concepts about print
- Develop alphabetic and word/print knowledge
- Develop phonological awareness: word awareness, syllable counting and identification, onset and rime manipulation
- Apply early reading/writing skills

Elementary (K–5)

- Develop phonemic and word recognition, concepts of print, receptive language to independent reading
- Build fluency and comprehension at grade-level complexity band
- Read balance of literary and informational text closely: ask and answer questions; identify key details, main topics, and themes; compare and contrast; identify points of view; begin to summarize & draw inferences from evidence
- Write and present opinion, informative/ explanatory, and narrative pieces appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; by grade four write multi-paragraph texts; participate in peer collaboration and review; draw evidence from texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- Learn how to engage in collaborative conversations and academic talk
- Develop command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing and speaking
- Determine word meanings using a range of strategies.
- With support, use technology for research and writing and oral presentations

Middle (6–8)

- Read/comprehend literary and informational text across disciplines independently and proficiently, develop discipline-specific literacy skills
- Read closely: understand explicit information, determine central ideas and themes, make logical inferences, analyze and cite evidence, summarize, compare structure and points of view across texts, evaluate claims
- Write and present arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives based on substantive and relevant evidence and descriptive details; address alternative claims in arguments.
- Answer research questions by evaluating evidence in multiple print and digital sources
- Prepare for and participate in collaborative discussions and purposeful academic talk
- Acquire/use increasingly complex academic and domain-specific vocabulary and conventions of English grammar and usage
- Integrate digital media and technology for research, collaboration, writing, and presentations

High (9–12)

- Read/comprehend complex and seminal United States and world literary and informational texts across disciplines; apply discipline-specific literacy skills
- Read closely: analyze and evaluate authors' choices; compare multiple interpretations on the same text or subject
- Produce sophisticated, precise writing and presentations with deep evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of evidence from multiple sources; address strengths/limitations of claims and counterclaims; anticipate audience concerns
- Conduct sustained research to answer a question or solve a problem; assess the strengths/limitations of each source
- Initiate/participate in collaborative conversations and academic talk: advance discussions, connect to broader themes, probe reasoning and evidence, incorporate and respond to diverse perspectives, synthesize ideas, resolve conflicts
- Acquire/use increasingly sophisticated academic and domain-specific vocabulary and conventions of English grammar and usage
- Integrate digital media and technology for research, collaboration, writing, and presentations

College and Career Ready

- Demonstrate independence
- Ability to build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience/ task/purpose/ discipline
- Comprehend/critique complex materials
- Value evidence
- Communicate effectively verbally and in writing
- Use technology strategically and capably
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

Core Components: Standards and Frameworks; Articulation and Alignment; Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention; Educator Preparation and professional Learning; Engaging Families and Communities; Assessment and Progress Monitoring; Accountability

Component 1. Standards and Frameworks

State Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve: The recent adoption of the *CCSS for ELA* for K–12 public schools offers California an opportunity to retool the educational system to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the academic challenges of college and career preparation programs. In conjunction with the *CCSS for ELA* requirements, current legislation requires the state of California to develop new English-language arts and mathematics curriculum frameworks, which will be fully aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*. All K–5 educators should be knowledgeable about the *CCSS for ELA* and how they compare to the California standards adopted in 1997, as well as become familiar with the *California ELD Standards* and curriculum frameworks.

California’s 1997 Content Standards: The *English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: California’s Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* were adopted by the SBE in 1997. The standards describe what students should master in ELA by the end of each grade level. These standards are currently being replaced by the *CCSS for ELA*.

Common Core State Standards: In August 2010, the California SBE adopted the *CCSS for ELA*, with California additions. The *CCSS for ELA* are in the process of being included into instructional practices and materials as CCSS-aligned assessments are scheduled for the 2014–2015 school year. The *CCSS for ELA* are presented in four strands: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each strand progresses to a strand-specific set of college and career readiness anchor standards identical across all grades and content standards (CDE 2010a). Students who achieve the goals of the standards will be fluent readers, critical thinkers, informative writers, effective speakers, and engaged listeners and will use technology as a source of information and a means of communication.

In kindergarten through grade five, *CCSS for ELA* require a balance of reading and writing activities as students gain experience and skills with both informational and narrative texts. As they plan, elementary teachers should take into consideration that the *CCSS for ELA* place stronger emphasis on reading informational texts, combined with increased text complexity, to substantiate written and oral arguments, academic writing, critical thinking, and analysis. For the first time, the *CCSS for ELA* also identify reading and writing standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (CDE 2010a).

English-Language-Development Standards: In 1999, the California SBE adopted K–12 ELD standards that provided an overview of what English learners should master as they move toward fluency in English. The 1999 ELD standards are aligned to the 1997 ELA content standards and are separated into the domains of listening and speaking, reading, and writing. The levels through which English learners progress are identified as Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. The new *California ELD Standards*, fully aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*, are in the final stage of adoption, scheduled for the fall of 2012.

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve: In 2006, the California SBE adopted the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*. This framework offers a blueprint to LEAs for the implementation of the 1997 ELA content standards. This curriculum framework describes the content students should master by the end of each grade level and form the basis of curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve proficiency (CDE 2007). The new *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework* is scheduled for adoption in 2014 and will include the new *CCSS for ELA* and the new *California ELD Standards*.

Component 2. Articulated and Aligned Curriculum

The standards describe the content knowledge and skills that students are expected to master by the end of each grade level. The curriculum is the vehicle used to teach the standards and describes what is taught. An effective curriculum is a plan of activities and instructional strategies that engages students, is based on research and grade-appropriate expectations and is aligned with state education policy.

Knowledge and collaboration among educators regarding the continuum of learning that elementary students experience as they transition through critical academic stages helps to ensure that children succeed and continue to apply what they learn. Ideally, educators at all levels should possess the knowledge and skills to help their students succeed in each stage of learning, to ensure vertical articulation and cohesive curriculum alignment between same-grade classrooms and preceding and successive grades, and to enable successful transitions.

Articulated Curriculum: Systematic, vertical articulation practices among educators in preschool, elementary, and middle school programs are essential to successfully transition all students into each successive developmental and academic level. To ensure a comprehensive pathway through the grades, a local literacy plan should focus on the entire scope of the *CCSS for ELA* from kindergarten through grade twelve and incorporate strong vertical articulation practices. School leaders should encourage and facilitate articulation and collaboration among all elementary school teachers to help students move through major developmental and academic transitions.

The 2011 CDE publication, *A Look at Kindergarten Through Grade Six in California Public Schools: Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics* includes a review of the important prerequisite ELA skills and concepts students should have learned before entering kindergarten, as well as a comprehensive overview of grade-level expectations as students transition through the elementary grades (CDE 2011e). This document is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/documents/alookatkthrugrade6.pdf#search=a%20look%20at%20kindergarten%20through%20grade%206&view=FitH&pagemode=none>.

To ensure successful transitions, familiarity with the entire scope of the *CCSS for ELA* from kindergarten through grade six is essential for all elementary educators. Understanding the preceding and following grade-level standard requirements, along with the associated curriculum frameworks and ELD standards, is essential for teachers participating in major grade transitions such as entering kindergarten, kindergarten to grade one, grade three to grade four, and from elementary to middle school.

Transitional Kindergarten: Among both traditional and transitional kindergarten teachers, understanding the *Early Learning Foundations* is critical to ensure smooth transitions for young students who attended preschool and for those who did not. To build a bridge between early learning and kindergarten, California has established transitional kindergarten for children turning five between September 2 and December 2. Transitional kindergarten is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified, developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum. Transitional kindergarten provides students opportunities to be engaged in learning experiences that allow them to develop socially, cognitively, linguistically, physically, and emotionally while preparing them for academic success in kindergarten and beyond. Therefore, in the transitional kindergarten classroom, special

emphasis will be placed on social-emotional development, including self-regulation, language development and early literacy, math, and physical development skills.

Aligned Curriculum: The *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools* supports kindergarten through grade five (K–5) educators in implementing high-quality curriculum practices that provide students with the knowledge and skills described in the *ELA Content Standards*. A new K–12 curriculum framework is currently being developed to be fully aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*, and facilitate curriculum design and implementation of the *CCSS for ELA*. Much of the existing California early learning framework in *Early Learning Foundations* aligns directly with the *CCSS for ELA* and prepares young children for the new standards.

Key Features of the CCSS for ELA: As implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* proceeds, it is critical that all stakeholders in elementary education understand the essential literacy components stressed in the newly adopted standards to ensure that all students have access to the core curriculum. The following literacy components are emphasized in the *CCSS* for kindergarten through grade five:

Foundational Skills: The foundational skills standards are contained in the *CCSS for ELA* K–5 standards only and emphasize students' understanding and knowledge of features and organization of print and basic conventions of the English writing system. Developing competence in phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition skills, and building fluency and comprehension skills are the focus in the early grades (CDE 2010e).

Reading Literary and Informational Text: The *CCSS for ELA* bring a new focus on literacy instruction with a balanced emphasis on reading literature and informational text in the early elementary grades and an increased emphasis on informational text from grade four and above. Students read from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging texts with an emphasis including, but not limited to the following skills:

- Ask and answer questions to clarify word meaning and comprehension
- Identify and describe key details, main topics, characters, events, themes, and how a text is structured
- Begin to summarize and draw inferences from evidence
- Learn to compare and contrast

- Identify points of view
- Acquire habits of independent and close reading

Literature selections include stories, drama and poetry, and informational selections include literary nonfiction and historical, scientific, and technical texts. Students are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and build upon skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades. To provide students with a strong foundation, the curriculum must be intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades.

Writing: Students in the elementary grades learn to produce writing appropriate to task and purpose and write over extended timeframes. The *CCSS for ELA* go beyond learning the writing process to focus on composing well-organized opinion, informational/explanatory, and narrative writing pieces. Students also developing skills in:

- Collaborative, shared research and writing
- Follow the writing process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing
- Gather and organize information or evidence from text to support analysis, reflection, and research

Speaking and Listening: The *CCSS for ELA* emphasize a wide range of speaking and listening activities from collaborative conversations to formal presentations that include the development of skills such as:

- Listening attentively and contributing ideas
- Asking and answering clarifying questions
- Recounting key ideas and details
- Planning and delivering presentations using diverse-media displays as appropriate

Language: Students in the elementary grades learn and demonstrate emerging command of language use and function and continually expand vocabulary when listening, speaking, reading and writing. Explicit and direct vocabulary instruction is an area of additional emphasis. Attention to precision in vocabulary choices to aid in comprehension is a major focus in the *CCSS for ELA*, including the accurate use of both academic and discipline-

specific words and phrases and independence in building vocabulary knowledge. The *CCSS for ELA* language standards for the elementary grades emphasize:

- Gaining a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
- Understanding of word relationships, nuances, figurative language in word meaning
- Determining meaning of vocabulary using a variety of strategies including context, affixes and roots, reference materials
- Acquiring and using general academic and domain-specific words and phrases

Since the *CCSS for ELA* build upon knowledge and understandings mastered in preceding grades, alignment and articulation is especially important in elementary grades so students have multiple opportunities to attain skills needed for college and career success. This aspect is especially important for fostering the academic development of all students in California, including English learners and children with disabilities or other special needs.

Component 3. Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention

Instruction refers to the methods and strategies used to teach a curriculum. In a well-articulated system, aligned with foundations and standards, curriculum and instruction together connect students' language and literacy learning on a balanced continuum from infancy through grade twelve. To accomplish an articulated and seamless pathway for K–5 students, California is aligning its recommended instructional resources and materials to the *CCSS for ELA*.

A rich, student-centered learning environment where teachers interact responsively with elementary students to develop their language and literacy skills is critical to prepare students for the major academic challenges they will encounter progressing through school. The CDE maintains a system of literacy support for LEAs by providing research-based publications, technical assistance, professional learning resources, review of standards-aligned curricular materials and

resources, and instructional methodology recommendations based on extensive research on how children learn to read and write.

In elementary curriculum, standards-based instruction is critical to develop students' literacy and proficiency in ELA to set them on a path to become lifelong readers and effective communicators (CDE 2011e). The challenge for educators is to organize and deliver effective, efficient instruction in the essential skills and concepts that students must master as they progress through the grades.

The following components comprise a comprehensive LEA literacy plan:

Standards-Based Instruction: *The Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools* elaborates on the content standards by not only providing a curricular framework, but also describing the types of instruction necessary to help all students, including English learners and students with disabilities, achieve proficiency in ELA. The framework addresses reading, writing, listening, speaking, and written and oral English-language conventions for learners from kindergarten through grade twelve and offers extensive guidance in planning and implementing instruction that is grounded in research (CDE 2007). The 2007 framework will be updated in 2014 to align with the *CCSS for ELA* and will include the new *California ELD Standards*.

At each grade level, the framework also provides the basis for establishing criteria used for evaluating instructional materials. The SBE's Instructional Quality Commission will guide the revision of existing curriculum frameworks and evaluation criteria to align to the *CCSS*, with California additions, for both mathematics and ELA. The ELA framework and instructional materials for kindergarten through grade eight will include the new *California ELD Standards*, strategies for developing literacy through other disciplines (e.g., history/social studies and science), and strategies to address the needs of students with disabilities. The curricula that the SBE adopts will provide LEAs with many options to select standards-aligned textbooks, instructional materials, and intensive intervention programs to best meet their students' instructional needs.

An additional resource is the Recommended Literature: Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade list (2011f), available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/>. This Web-based, searchable database provides a collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents that reflect the complex types of text students should be reading at school and

outside of class. Selected literature titles are matched to the CCSS for ELA in an effort to support teachers, students, parents, and other education stakeholders in linking literacy to discipline-specific instruction.

High-Quality Reading Instruction: Reading is the most important skill that students develop during their early academic years, and kindergarten through grade three is the optimal period of time for such learning. Grade four traditionally marks the transition from learning to read to reading to learn (CDE 2011e). Beginning in grade four, students learn to recognize increasingly complex words in a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction text and materials. Educators must have a concrete knowledge of how to effectively implement high-quality reading instruction in the elementary grades, with an increased focus on more explicit instruction, vocabulary development, and motivation and engagement.

High-quality reading instruction emphasizes and includes:

Systematic, explicit instruction: Empirical evidence demonstrates that systematic and explicit instruction promotes reading achievement, and students who can read fluently in grade one are at a significant advantage throughout their school careers (Stockard 2011). Examples of strategies used in such programs include establishing clear instructional targets, modeling of strategies and skills, guided practice as well as independent practice with corrections, and instruction-embedded assessments. Systematic instruction is comprehensive and provides a strategic sequence and a consistent instructional format. Many studies show that curricula that embody these elements consistently produce larger achievement gains (Stockard 2011).

Vocabulary development: Young students must also develop their vocabulary knowledge and skills in more sophisticated ways, including through their own research and by reading informational texts across disciplines (CDE 2011e). The *CCSS for ELA* support this endeavor as students learn to apply word learning strategies. In the upper elementary grades, students begin to acquire and apply a full and complex range of lifelong language and literacy skills, and teachers must be prepared to provide instruction that fully recognizes and supports this critical stage.

Motivation and engagement: Students who are motivated and engaged have higher learning outcomes. Motivation is often defined as the general attraction to a task, and engagement is the amount of time and effort that will be put forth in the task. Teachers should be knowledgeable about research-based instructional strategies and learning opportunities that promote student motivation and engagement. There needs to be a clear distinction between

entertaining students and providing highly engaging activities that are closely connected to grade-level learning goals and objectives (Kamil 2008).

Students entering the upper elementary grades without grade-level fluency and proficiency in reading comprehension require intensive intervention and increased instructional time to address needed skills and strategies to independently read and comprehend grade-level texts. Due to the great variation in reading difficulties upper elementary learners may face, individualized instruction may need to be handled by specialists, who carefully diagnose and plan for remedial help with proven interventions. LEAs must establish a concrete criteria and a referral process for such interventions.

High-Quality Writing, Speaking, and Listening Instruction: The *CCSS for ELA* place a premium on students writing from sources, i.e., draw evidence from text to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information (CDE 2012). The standards also emphasize integrating speaking and listening skills to allow students to improve their writing draft revisions through effective engagement in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners. Through discussions, they can build on others' ideas and learn to clearly express their own.

As with reading, students entering the upper elementary grades without grade-level abilities in writing, speaking, and listening require intensive intervention and increased instructional time. Within LEA's referral processes for interventions, such as a Response to Instruction and Intervention process, specific attention to the needs of struggling students and special populations, such as English learners and special education students, must be incorporated.

Universal Design for Learning: Students learn in a variety of ways and the philosophy of universal design for learning (UDL), which can be enabled by technology, is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. UDL reduces barriers in instruction; provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges; and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are English learners (U.S. Department of Education 2011).

UDL enables educators to design flexible educational environments by allowing for:

- Multiple means of representation—gives learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- Multiple means of expression—provides learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- Multiple means of engagement—taps into learner interests, challenges them appropriately, and motivates learning

UDL is a highly successful framework for designing educational environments that enable all learners to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. The implementation of UDL to increase learning outcomes will reduce barriers to the curriculum and provide rich supports for learning (Center for Applied Special Technology 2011).

Multi-tiered System of Support: Well-planned, differentiated literacy instruction increases success in meeting the wide range of students' abilities. Developing educator awareness of research-based interventions, when to use them, and, based on individual student needs, which interventions are most effective for struggling readers, students with disabilities, and English learners is essential. Examples of strategies for differentiating instruction include adjusting pacing, complexity, novelty, and depth (CDE 2011e). When teachers use systematically planned differentiation strategies in the classroom, students with a wide range of abilities, including those with special needs, can benefit from appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction while still accessing the core content.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²): In 2008, California adopted a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, which was subsequently expanded to become Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) to emphasize general education's responsibility for implementing schoolwide high-quality instruction, positive behavioral strategies, and early intervention instructional approaches. Effective use of RtI² strategies helps to identify students who are at risk of academic failure, ensuring these students are offered appropriate interventions. The use of RtI² processes benefits all students, but is essential for struggling readers and for students who have identified disabilities.

RtI² processes help prevent academic failure in the elementary grades through early and research-based instructional interventions and frequent progress monitoring. Effective use of this approach ensures that struggling students receive a comprehensive curriculum that integrates language and literacy development in all disciplines and builds upon the language and knowledge strengths that they already possess. In addition, successful implementation of RtI² in general education may reduce the percentage of unnecessary placements of students into special education programs and help identify students who need accelerated rates of instruction.

The RtI² process emphasizes these instructional strategies:

- High-quality first teaching in every grade and discipline

- Early screening and identification of language and literacy instructional needs
- Differentiated instruction and intervention when necessary for remediation or acceleration

Administrators and leadership teams, in collaboration with teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day-to-day use of the RtI² approach. Analysis of how students respond to literacy instruction and interventions is an organizing principle for structures and programs that already exist in schools. An education system implementing RtI² promotes collaboration and shared responsibility for the literacy learning of all students across all personnel, programs, and parent inclusion processes located in any given school (CDE 2011h).

The RtI² process generally uses a three-tiered approach:

- Tier 1: Core instruction is rigorous, relevant, aligned with standards, and differentiated to accommodate students' individual needs. Tier 1 provides the foundation of a systemic RtI² approach across age and grade levels. Systematic screening, along with diagnostic and progress-monitoring assessments, provides data to guide instruction and identify students who may be struggling with grade-level literacy skills or content, or those who need accelerated instruction. Teachers provide universal access and differentiated instruction in small flexible groups during core classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Tier 2: Supplemental, small-group instruction is provided in addition to instruction in the core curriculum. Instruction addresses specific skills that are essential for grade-level competency. At this level, students who are not making adequate progress in the core curriculum are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs based on their performance and rates of progress. In particular, linguistic attention to English learners becomes essential in providing appropriate interventions.
- Tier 3: Intensive instruction accelerates learning for students who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and intervention. At this level, students may receive individualized, intensive interventions that target skill deficits for accelerated remediation of existing problems and the prevention of more severe problems. Replacement curriculum for the core curriculum or different settings may be included but should be used judiciously and based on multiple measures of assessments.

At each tier, instruction should be high quality, based on research-proven strategies, and aligned with state-adopted standards. Progress monitoring assessments provide vital information to make informed decisions for instruction across the tiers to better meet the needs of individual students. Data gathered from RtI² can be utilized in the identification process to determine if a student requires special education services and allows educators and parents to make informed decisions about instructional or program placement. The collaborative, data-based, decision-making, and problem-solving process among all stakeholders involved with a child is vital to the implementation of RtI².

Additional information about RtI² is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/index.asp>.

Literacy needs of special populations: The use of multiple strategies is required to meet the needs of struggling readers, students with disabilities, English learners, students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with combinations of special instructional needs (CDE 2011e). Ideally, local literacy plans should specifically address the needs of special populations, and educators must ensure that all students have universal access to the core curriculum.

When planning for universal access, educators should: utilize frequent progress-monitoring assessments; engage in careful planning and organization; differentiate instruction to meet students' individual needs; employ flexible grouping strategies; enlist help from others; and use technology or other instructional devices. Some students may require intervention services that involve attention to specific reading and writing skills and instruction at the appropriate levels of difficulty (CDE 1999). Effective local literacy plans specifically address the needs of students who consistently underperform on statewide assessments, including the following populations:

Socioeconomically disadvantaged: Children who live in low-income households may face learning challenges that are best addressed as early as possible. Children facing severe economic hardship may have nutritional concerns, inconsistent or inadequate housing arrangements, parents or guardians who have limited literacy skills, and other outside influences that may significantly impact school performance. Socioeconomically disadvantaged children cross all racial and ethnic groups, may also be English learners or students with disabilities, and are often clustered or isolated in schools or entire districts.

Educators should be knowledgeable of the unique needs of all children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and should also seek resources and information to understand and provide high-quality instruction to children belonging to the predominant racial and ethnic groups in their districts and schools. Students' learning supports and experiences outside of school should be considered if their academic achievement is affected by these factors, and additional supports at school should be promptly implemented when necessary.

Students with disabilities: An essential next step for California educators is to integrate an RtI² process in general education to help prevent academic failure and ensure more accurate identification and placement of students in need of special education services. Equipping teachers with the knowledge to determine eligibility for special education services must include factual evidence, such as results from formative and summative assessments demonstrating students' lack of positive responses to high-quality instruction.

Educators instructing students in special education should use research-based methods and best-practice teaching strategies for English learners with special needs. Strong collaboration between special education and general education teachers, as well as English-learner specialists, reading specialists, and literacy coaches to adequately address the literacy needs and increase reading and writing achievement of all students with disabilities is a core dynamic of a quality local literacy plan.

English learners: The 2010 CDE publication, *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches* provides research-based instructional recommendations for language and literacy development of English learners. Incorporating guidelines from this publication into a local literacy plan is another avenue to encourage all teachers to stay current with ongoing research in the field.

Research-based instructional practices have been shown to have positive effects on English learners' abilities to acquire English. Instructional strategies include: activating and strengthening students' background knowledge, promoting oral interactions and extending students' academic conversations, repeating key ideas and their associated domain-specific language, explicitly teaching grammatical structures and functions, and academic language (Echevarria and Vogt 2011). Frequent progress monitoring is essential to ensure that instruction has been successful.

For English learners to benefit from universal access to the curriculum, teachers may need additional support to plan instruction, differentiate curriculum, infuse instruction with specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) techniques, and use grouping strategies effectively. Instruction across disciplines should be promoted despite low literacy or limited proficiency in the English language, along with the critical-thinking and analytical skills and the particular reading and writing strategies of the disciplines (CDE 2011e).

Educators are encouraged to promote biliteracy and multiculturalism in the classroom and maintain a culturally responsive approach during interactions with students, tapping into students' background knowledge to guide and enhance instruction. Educators should understand the role that primary language literacy plays in overall academic achievement, the differences between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" or high-functioning social language (commonly referred to as 'playground English') versus "cognitive academic language proficiency" needed for success in higher education and careers (CDE 2010d). It is critical educators address the needs of long-term English learners who lack the academic language skills to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (Californians Together 2010). Understanding these broad concepts and applying appropriate instructional strategies are critical to improving the learning outcomes of English learners, especially as they approach middle school.

Students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: Culture shapes a person's beliefs, values, and morals. In the United States, the education system has historically deculturalized Native American, African American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican students as well as students from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia (Gay 2010). Culturally responsive teaching means developing an instructional environment for students that validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires, and motivates learning. Culturally responsive instructional elements include:

- Standards-based teaching with culturally responsive literature
- Systematic teaching of situational appropriateness
- Building on cultural behaviors to create positive classroom communities
- Expansion of academic vocabulary instruction using conceptually coded words

- Creating an inviting learning environment for student success, purposeful use of texts that affirm and validate the backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences of the students
- Building an understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of Standard English as differentiated from the home language or vernacular
- Providing an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment

Most importantly, although students may not come from the same cultural or linguistic background as the teacher that difference does not mean the students have fewer abilities. Coming to school with different cultural and background references, having different interests, learning differently, and/or processing information in multiple ways are traits possessed by all children. By being more reflective and understanding students' diverse cultural backgrounds, linguistic needs, and learning styles educators can become more aware of how they teach, how students learn, and how to increase their own instructional effectiveness for teaching all students (Terry and Irving 2010).

Effective Use of Technology: The *CCSS for ELA* and California's current digital initiatives stress the importance of using technology in the classroom to assist in meeting the standards. Effective use of technology targets specific learning tasks and is informed by research-based, best-practice methods. The *CCSS for ELA* emphasize the use of technology as an integral part of instruction, learning, and assessment, as well as analysis of data to track student progress and guide instructional and program decisions. The increased focus on technology and data require comprehensive and ongoing participation of all educators to encourage and promote a digital-age learning culture and facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (International Society for Technology in Education 2007).

Increasing the focus on technology is recommended for the following educational stakeholders:

- School leaders—to manage and compare data to identify model learning environments and target areas in need of intervention or reform
- Teachers—to document learning and track progress, as well as serve as an instructional and assessment tool to support learner-centered practices
- Students—to use technology as a learning tool for practice, research, and collaboration

An important first step is for all educators and students to have equal access to current technology and understand how to use it. Use of technology that supports the instructional goals and district-adopted curriculum will prepare students for increasingly complex life and work environments where technical skills will be required. Giving elementary school students meaningful purposes to think critically, problem solve, communicate, and collaborate using available technology will increase their ability to understand and use technology tools well into middle school, high school, college, and career. The potential of both existing and new technologies in supporting student learning is not in the technologies themselves but the ways they are used as tools for learning (Marzano and Pickering 2003).

LEAs are encouraged to place a strong emphasis on technology use to support 21st century learning by including these practices in local literacy plans:

- Increase educator and student knowledge and use of technology as an integral part of instruction and learning.
- Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction and ensures that both teachers and students acquire 21st century technology skills.
- Enable educators to plan strategically and integrate technology use into the classroom in innovative and meaningful ways that model digital-age work and learning.
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society.
- Encourage teachers to continuously improve professional practices and exhibit leadership in school and professional communities by promoting and demonstrating the effective use of digital tools and resources for literacy development.

Currently teachers, with an understanding of technology, design effective and productive student learning opportunities such as engaging students in critical analysis of digital media, or assigning students to use the Internet to develop information technology literacy skills. Instruction for students in comprehending multimedia “text”—which involves accepting an expanded definition of text, reading, and literacy—is a key information technology literacy skill. Students also need to understand how to assign credibility to different media when conducting online research.

LEAs are encouraged to make technology integration a priority and incorporate its use in a principled, research-based way, rather than following trends. Educators at elementary school levels should be equipped to:

- Incorporate technology skills to support 21st century instruction, learning, and home communication
- Develop electronic hubs for information and resources for teachers and families
- Develop and utilize teacher Web sites to support school to home communications
- Utilize online grade books
- Participate in technology-based assessment
- Collaborate on data analysis and interpretation

Due to the varying skill levels and comfort using technology to support student learning, teachers are encouraged to exhibit leadership and initiative by providing and engaging in cross training with peers in an ongoing culture of collaboration and learning.

Component 4. Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

California is in the process of developing a comprehensive system of improved educator preparation and professional learning guidelines and resources that are fully aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and the new *California ELD Standards*. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) is revising credentialing requirements to align with the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*. Practicing educators are encouraged to participate in trainings to become familiar with the new standards, revised curriculum frameworks, and assessment requirements. At the local level, districts and schools are strongly encouraged to develop comprehensive professional learning plans that include literacy instruction as a core component.

At the heart of any professional learning plan is strong and cohesive leadership. To successfully implement the new standards and increase student academic achievement, district and school leaders need to engage teachers in ongoing professional learning to stay informed of current research and best practices in literacy instruction and assessment. To ensure effectiveness, professional learning should become a system-wide priority at the district level—not simply a

strategy for individual educator growth (Learning Forward 2011). Key to the success of any professional learning initiative at the district level is a system based on research, collaboration, learning resources, and access to high quality learning opportunities on an ongoing basis.

The establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on literacy at the local level is an effective way for LEAs to improve student achievement and instructional practices.. These PLCs should focus on:

- Defining the challenge
- Identifying solution strategies
- Implementing strategies identified
- Assessing results
- Defining additional changes

Ongoing collaboration among key stakeholders will enhance the work of professional learning communities and help to ensure visibility and a strong commitment to improving literacy achievement on a system-wide level. Variables that have a direct bearing on student achievement include teachers having access to books and materials, technology, professional learning, and other resources such as collaboration time.

Statewide Professional Learning Initiatives: Past professional learning initiatives have positively affected instructional practices and increased the capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and meet the needs of struggling readers; however, a significant number of elementary-grade students require specific language and literacy instruction to meet their learning needs. The implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* provides an opportunity for LEAs to emphasize professional learning to target student interventions, based on proven research, and support struggling readers identified through established criteria such as the criteria described in the RtI² process.

In 2011, the California legislature enacted a requirement for the CDE to develop a series of interactive professional learning modules on topics related to the implementation of the *CCSS*. By the end of 2012, school leaders and teachers will be able to electronically access a variety of resources pertaining to specific topics within each module for independent

learning or onsite training workshops. The learning modules will incorporate specific strategies for literacy instruction in all grade spans and disciplines.

In 2012, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) established an Educator Excellence Task Force, representing a joint effort between the CDE and the CTC to strengthen the California teacher corps. The Educator Excellence Task Force produced the *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* report that includes the recommendations to:

- Develop comprehensive recruitment, training and preparation frameworks for both new and experienced educators;
- Encourage the development of more effective educator evaluation systems;
- Ensure that these systems are supported by training for evaluators, mentoring for teachers, and professional learning programs; and
- Recommend how these systems should be designed, supported, and implemented.

Recognizing the central role that teachers and school leaders play in improving student learning, the establishment of the Educator Excellence Task Force system will lead to teachers who are consistently well-prepared and well-supported and continue to have opportunities to grow throughout their careers. Additional information about the task force and report is available on the CDE Educator Excellence Task Force Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ee.asp>.

Support for Professional Learning: California's commitment to professional learning will consist of supports to education leaders and teachers including, but not limited to:

- Integration of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *California ELD Standards* with the *CCSS for ELA*
- *CCSS for ELA* implementation support resources, including implementation guides and professional learning modules, that incorporate research-based instructional practices and strategies that address the learning needs of all students

- Guidance and support for the organization of intervention processes in a tiered approach as suggested by the RtI² approach
- Guidance and support for the implementation of site-based, collaborative approaches to data analysis that addresses individual student needs, analyzes items and errors, and measures student growth through multiple assessment measures
- Guidance and supports for the implementation of integrated technology into daily curriculum and home communication to guide educator preparation and professional learning

California has adopted rigorous educator standards to guide coursework and expectations in administrator and teacher education programs. California's educator standards require these programs to base content and instruction upon state and nationally recognized criteria to help develop and support outstanding educators.

Educator Standards: Standards for educator knowledge serve as important guides for the content of state certification programs and professional learning course offerings. The CTC awards credentials and certificates on the basis of completion of programs that meet standards for educator preparation and competence. For each type of professional credential in education, the CTC has developed and adopted standards based upon recent research and expert advice of professional educators (CTC 2008). Such standards focus on knowledge of both content and pedagogy.

California bases its educator preparation on one comprehensive set of standards:

Common Standards: The CTC has developed and adopted standards for each type of professional credential in education, which are based upon recent research and the expert advice of many professional educators. Each standard specifies a level of quality and effectiveness that the CTC requires from programs offering academic and professional preparation in education. When a new program is proposed, an institution submits a Common Standards Addendum to address how the new program will integrate with the already approved programs (CTC 2008).

California bases its professional learning guidance on two sets of standards:

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession: This 2009 publication was jointly developed by the CTC and the CDE. These standards set forth the expectations for current classroom teachers and provide them with a common

language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the profession by which all teachers can define and develop their practice. The standards are not regulations that control the specific actions of teachers, but instead act as guides for teachers as they develop, refine, and extend their practice (CTC 2009).

The Standards for Professional Learning: In 2011, the *National Staff Development Council Standards* were revised into a new publication called the *Standards for Professional Learning*. Developed by Learning Forward, with extensive contributions from professional and education organizations, the standards define the essential elements and conditions needed for professional learning that lead to more effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The standards emphasize that the fundamental purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward 2011).

Increased focus on and dissemination of educator standards will help to ensure that future and current school leaders and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the *CCSS for ELA* and help all students reach their maximum potential. Education leaders and teachers should review the new educator standards within a collaborative team, carefully reflect on the implications of the standards for their county, district, or school, and begin to develop a system-wide professional learning plan (Learning Forward 2011).

Expanded Learning: The *SRCL Plan* emphasizes the continuum of learning that occurs from birth through grade twelve. To effectively participate in this continuum, an educator-learning plan for all elementary educators incorporates the following:

- New requirements of the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*
- Curriculum alignment and transitions from preschool to kindergarten, grade three to grade four, and from elementary to middle school
- Research and best practices in literacy instruction
- Literacy needs of special populations, including students with disabilities, English learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students

- Appropriate challenges for high-achievers and increased expectations for all students
- Increasing cultural sensitivity and reducing socioeconomic barriers
- State policy and requirements
- Organization of intervention processes using a multi-tiered approach (such as RtI²) to meet the diverse needs of all children
- Assessment tools in language and literacy
- Effective use of technology
- Conducting family outreach activities to communicate and collaborate about ways to support language and literacy learning and development
- Successfully implementing literacy instruction in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs

Measuring Learning Outcomes: Ongoing measurements of educator learning, including evaluations and observational activities to measure educator understanding and use of learned strategies, are essential to ensure preparation and professional learning objectives are met, with additional support provided as needed.

Educator Collaboration: As emphasized throughout this plan, educator collaboration is a critical element to any successful literacy plan. Multiple opportunities exist at the LEA level for increased staff collaboration on literacy efforts, and professional learning on this topic is highly recommended, especially for district and school leaders as they formulate local literacy plans. Existing programs such as BTSA and PAR are examples of highly effective collaborative support systems that are currently in place in California. In addition, educators can participate in ongoing collaboration and peer learning through social networks, education blogs, and initiatives such as the California Brokers of Expertise Project. This CDE sponsored Web site is available at <http://www.myboe.org/>. Education leaders are encouraged to utilize these resources, as well as any new learning support initiatives at the local level.

Increased communication across early childhood education, K–12 education, and higher education stakeholder groups, along with increased articulation across the grade spans, will be vital to the success of California’s statewide literacy

efforts. The desired outcome of this communication is an effective and aligned plan that will be implemented statewide. The *SRCL* team will continue to share research and resources related to teacher preparation and professional learning to support literacy instruction aligned to the *CCSS for ELA* in all grades and disciplines, including ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Component 5. Engaging Families and Communities

California is poised to implement a connected, comprehensive system of literacy foundations and standards from infancy through grade twelve that includes families and communities as strong partners. Using the standards, frameworks, and strong partnerships, instruction at the local level will more effectively address the needs of all children, including those belonging to historically underperforming subgroups, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Improved communication and collaboration with families and communities are keys to the success of the *SRCL Plan*.

Family Involvement and Support: Involving families as partners in the literacy development of young students is an integral part of a seamless support system. To fully support a comprehensive, articulated, and aligned system, families must become aware of the expectations that will be required of their children as they move through the K–12 system. Well in advance, families need to become familiar with the rigor that their children will experience in preparation for kindergarten and need multiple opportunities to participate as active partners in their children’s education. Active family involvement, along with effective outreach and parent education opportunities, are essential to increase school readiness and academic skills among elementary-aged children. To effectively involve families as partners, school leaders should:

- Emphasize ongoing communication between school and home in English and the home language, as needed
- Create a welcoming environment at school to encourage family involvement as partners in learning (regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation).
- Encourage family engagement in literacy activities

- Utilize multiple mediums for communication, including technology, and provide alternative means if family does not have access to technology
- Provide services in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner
- Encourage parent education and promote involvement in school, home, and community activities that promote family literacy
- Encourage and support literacy in a child's first language (if other than English) to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy
- Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions from preschool to kindergarten, grade three to grade four, and from elementary to middle school

Beginning with effective and frequent communication between district and school offices and the homes of students, communication with families must allow for frequent interactions with teachers and knowledge of classroom expectations and progress toward meeting performance goals. School leaders and teachers must ensure that families receive easily accessible information and learning opportunities to support the language and literacy development of their children, including, but not limited to:

- Progress toward achieving mastery of the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*, if applicable
- The types of student assessments
- The RtI² instructional process
- The role of technology in instruction
- Self-paced and self-selected independent reading and writing
- Academic vocabulary

Schools leaders must also ensure opportunities for active involvement of English learners and students with disabilities and their families by providing information on the school's targeted services, programs, assessments, student progress, and longitudinal test data. Parents and guardians of English learners must have knowledge of the criteria and process for reclassification status from English learner to fluent English proficient and the importance of English proficiency to their

children's academic success and readiness for college and career. Parents and guardians must also understand the specific lack of literacy proficiency that may prevent reclassification.

The 2011CDE publication, *Family Engagement Framework: A Tool for California School Districts*, helps school districts engage families in their children's education. The Framework, produced in collaboration with the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd is outlined in a way to help school districts evaluate their progress and plan for improvements, and it emphasizes the strong link between parental involvement activities and student achievement. The Framework provides specific examples of what schools, communities, and parents can do to help students succeed. The publication also contains a list of articles that school administrators and teachers can read to create effective, research-based practices in family engagement (CDE 2011g). The document is available on the WestEd Web site at http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf.

Community Involvement and Support: Multiple opportunities exist for elementary educators to reach out to community organizations for support and collaboration. Primarily, elementary school leaders should maintain contact with the feeder preschools and middle schools that serve the same student populations and should establish mutual goals and support to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions.

Additional community partners include grant makers that invest in mutual educational projects; corporate sponsors; professional organizations and collaborative projects; community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, adult and parent education programs; and other local supporters of child development, literacy, and learning.

To increase community involvement and collaboration, elementary educators should:

- Increase collaborative efforts between preschool providers and early elementary educators to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions
- Seek public, private, foundation, or corporate grants for literacy program support from organizations with similar interests and goals
- Increase familiarity and involvement with professional initiatives, such as the Faculty Initiative Project, and organizations that promote the school and community connection

- Increase collaborative efforts with community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, and adult and parent education centers

Whether elementary education professionals organize group activities and projects, or simply extend information regarding events and services to families, working with community partners is an essential element to a cohesive system of literacy support for young students.

CDE Resources: The *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, a collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents, is a searchable database on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/> . The recommended titles reflect the quality and the complexity of the types of material students should be reading at school and outside of class. The list is available to teachers, parents, and community members and was recently updated to include literature as well as informational text for science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, math, world languages, physical education, and health. The database also contains selected texts written in Spanish.

Component 6. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. In addition to revising curriculum frameworks and instructional materials, California is updating the current statewide assessment system to align with the CCSS. At the local level, these new formative and summative assessments will be among the primary tools needed to identify student learning needs, monitor academic progress, and inform classroom instruction. They will also provide information needed to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of a district's approach to improving the literacy achievement of all students.

New literacy assessments will take into account the differences in reading and writing across the disciplines. Part of the reason for learning about a subject is to become an independent consumer of information in that discipline. Because so much learning is done through text, the ability to read in each discipline of importance should be assessed, in addition to the content of the discipline.

Current Assessment System: California's current K–12 assessment system is aligned to support the implementation of the 1997 state-adopted academic content standards and to meet state and federal reporting and accountability requirements. At the center of the current state assessment system is the *Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)* program, which is composed of several assessments designed to monitor the academic progress and proficiency of students in the K–12 educational system in core subjects. The *STAR* Program consists of four components:

- *California Standards Tests (CST)*: The *CSTs* are criterion-referenced tests that assess students' progress in mastering the California academic content standards in ELA, mathematics, science, and history-social science in grades two through eleven.
- *Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS)*: The *STS* are criterion-referenced tests that are aligned to the California content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics and assess mastery of the content standards in those subjects in grades two through eleven. Spanish-speaking English learners are required to take the *STS* if they receive instruction in Spanish or have been enrolled in a United States school for less than 12 months when testing begins. In addition, these students take the *CST* and/or *California Modified Assessment*. School districts have the option of administering the *STS* to Spanish-speaking English learners who have been enrolled in school in the U.S. for 12 months or more and are not receiving instruction in Spanish.
- *California Modified Assessment (CMA)*: The *CMA* is an alternate assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science for eligible students who have an IEP and meet the *CMA* eligibility criteria adopted by the SBE.
- *California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)*: The *CAPA* is an alternate performance assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science. It is an individually administered assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities who have an IEP.

California also uses two assessments that are not a part of the *STAR* program:

- The *California English Language Development Test. The CELDT* was developed to (1) identify English learners; (2) determine English learners' levels of English proficiency; and (3) assess the progress of English learners in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This test helps inform educators in

developing language instruction designed to assist English learners in their achievement of English-language proficiency.

- The *California High School Exit Examination*: The *CAHSEE* is aligned to the California content standards in ELA and mathematics. The primary purpose of the *CAHSEE* is to (1) significantly improve student achievement in public high schools; and (2) ensure that students who graduate from public high schools can demonstrate grade-level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. High school students must pass both sections of the *CAHSEE* to receive a high school diploma.

New Statewide Assessment Initiatives: In June 2011, California became a governing state in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, which allows the state to vote in fiscal and policy decisions and serve in work groups developing the various components of the new assessment system. The new system will emphasize the use of assessments to monitor progress and inform instruction in addition to serving as an accountability measure. California educators will play a significant role designing, developing, and scoring assessment items and performance tasks. Updated information on the SBAC is available on the California Department of Education Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>. California is also a member of the State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (Council of Chief State School Offices 2011) as it implements the CCSS. California's participation in these groups and its implementation of the *SRCL Plan* will ensure that the progress of all students in meeting grade-level academic content standards is being measured and monitored.

Effective Assessment Practices: To effectively participate in the state's new comprehensive literacy assessment efforts, school leaders should take the following steps:

- Implement screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative progress monitoring systems that are aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*
- Expand the use of district assessment systems if needed to (1) provide timely and appropriate language and literacy screening and assessments for identifying students who may need additional instructional support; and (2) inform instruction

- Establish local criteria for student benchmarks that will assist in determining the level of intervention, if needed, within RtI²
- Utilize variations, accommodations, and modifications of state assessments to align with the research on appropriate measures to take with high-stakes testing for English learners and students with disabilities
- Ensure that instruction is flexible, based on the analysis of assessment data, including data from the RtI² approach
- Use appropriate assessments, tools, measurements, and variations or accommodations for individual students as appropriate
- Communicate assessment data and instructional decisions to families of all students and increase frequency of communication for students requiring interventions, struggling readers and writers, students receiving special education services, and English learners
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing updated technology for assessment practices, including hardware for computer-based assessment and Web-based data systems.

Uses of Assessment Data: California's Blueprint *for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. Since the inception of the Federal *No Child Left Behind* requirement, assessment data have been produced, collected, and reported by LEAs as required, but there continues to be a need to more effectively use data to inform instruction and monitor progress to increase student achievement. The new assessment system will allow for more practical and productive use of data to inform and improve instruction, and will be designed to support student achievement rather than simply provide a new measure of accountability.

Well in advance of the implementation of the new assessments, LEAs will be able to maintain and/or establish a Web-based data system for teachers and administrators. Such a system will enable educators to aggregate data at the school and district levels to identify student subgroups needing additional instructional support in language and literacy development.

At the local level, LEAs can integrate technology into assessment practices by:

- Establishing electronic methods for collecting and recording all assessment data in an efficient and timely fashion
- Improving process for early identification and monitoring of struggling readers and writers through the use of assessment data to leverage the implementation of targeted instruction and raise achievement levels
- Establishing ongoing collaboration between teachers and administrators to analyze student data
- Establishing a system for recording and articulating student assessment data among administrators, teachers, and parents and families
- Implementing language and literacy assessments and longitudinal data monitoring of individual student progress in English and the student's home language, as appropriate

Educators should utilize progress monitoring data to:

- Measure and guide effective instruction
- Direct RtI² planning
- Inform the Individualized Education Plan process, English learner instruction, and accelerated programs

Component 7. Accountability

The cornerstone of the state's accountability system is the Academic Performance Index (API), a scale ranging from 200 to 1000, which measures improvement through annual growth for public schools, statistically significant subgroups of students, and LEAs. A school's score or placement on the API is an indicator of the school's overall student performance level on statewide assessments. The California API performance target for all schools and districts is 800, and a school's growth is measured by how well the school is moving toward or past that goal.

Public schools and districts must also meet the federal accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The API is one of four indicators used to measure whether schools or LEAs have met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets established by the California SBE. The federal AYP accountability system requires schools to meet annual benchmarks toward an ultimate goal of having 100 percent of students achieving proficiency or above in ELA and mathematics by 2014.

Along with the transition to the CCSS and the development of a new statewide assessment system, California will have new information available for the state accountability system. California's current accountability system is a cross-sectional model that evaluates school performance from one year to the next. It does not currently evaluate individual student progress. With the advent of the new assessment system, more information, including an individual student growth score, will be available for use in the state's accountability system. This new information will enable California to implement a growth model system—a method of measuring individual student progress on statewide assessments by tracking individual student scores from one year to the next—to ensure that schools and LEAs are held accountable for all students achieving proficiency on assessments measuring grade-level standards.

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five

The following goals and objectives are provided as guidance to assist local educational agencies in developing local literacy plans:

Component: Standards and Frameworks
Goal: Align revised curriculum frameworks and <i>California ELD Standards</i> with the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> .
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and implement the key indicators in the revised curriculum frameworks, the <i>California ELD Standards</i>, and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> as they relate to future success in literacy.• Integrate technology into the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> alignment and implementation processes.

Resources:

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/index.asp>

Grade Level Curriculum: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp>

Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/documents/schlibstndmar2011.doc>

California ELD Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

Standards for Global Learning in the Digital Age: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Articulated and Aligned Curriculum

Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of curriculum, extending from the *Early Learning Foundations* and based on the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*, that aligns to the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from birth through grade twelve, to ensure that each student is college and career ready.

Objectives:

- Align curriculum to the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards* by integrating aligned reading and writing instruction in ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.
- Utilize the national *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards* for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language and as a resource in implementing the *CCSS for ELA*.
- Ensure that new kindergarten through grade five ELA-adopted materials align to the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*.
- Provide instructional materials and resources that encourage independent reading and writing across genres and close reading of informational text at appropriate levels of text complexity to prepare students for college and career.
- Ensure that educators know and understand how a comprehensive, well-articulated curriculum, beginning with the *Early Learning Foundations*, translates into academic success with the *CCSS for ELA*, the *California ELD Standards*, and the *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards*.
- Develop an integral role for technology in the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*.

Resources:

A Look at Kindergarten Through Grade Six: www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/appendixesandreferences.pdf#search=College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20Anchor%20Standards%20for%20Reading&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

Early Learning Foundations: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Comprehensive, Targeted, Instruction and Intervention
Goal: Provide effective initial classroom instruction aligned with <i>CCSS for ELA</i> paired with a multiple-tiered system of support (such as Response to Instruction and Intervention) as needed.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students in kindergarten through grade five with access to a challenging, comprehensive, integrated core curriculum that applies academic content to real-life situations to prepare them for higher grades.• Deliver explicit literacy instruction throughout elementary English-language arts and content areas, using multiple delivery approaches that maximize students' active engagement with text and extensive opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.• Provide differentiated literacy instruction based on well-designed and implemented plans for struggling students through a multi-tiered system of identification and support process, such as RtI².• Identify and address the specific instructional needs of all students, with a particular focus on students with disabilities, English learners, students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and African American and Hispanic students.• Implement UDL strategies, as needed, to ensure that all learners have access to the knowledge and skills being taught and that all students can demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways thus reducing barriers to instruction and providing appropriate accommodations and challenges to all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited-English-proficient.• Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction, so that all students can demonstrate creative and critical thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes through the use of technology.• Individualize learning for all students by frequent, appropriate use of technology in all classrooms and other learning places.• Use technology applications in intervention programs, such as Title I, special education, reading intervention, and English learner programs.

Resources:

A Look at Kindergarten Through Grade Six: www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp

Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/documents/yr12elflyer.pdf>

Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/inclusionworks.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Response to Instruction and Intervention: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/Rtiresources.asp>

Response to Intervention (RtI) and English Learners: Making it Happen:
<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/product?ISBN=0137048904>

Transforming Education through Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.cast.org>

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of professional learning that addresses the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from infancy through grade twelve to ensure each student is college and career ready.

Objectives:

- Provide professional learning for kindergarten through grade 5 educators to know, understand, and implement the *CCSS for ELA*, the *California ELD Standards*, the *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards*, and the *Early Learning Foundations* for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten teachers.
- Establish central hubs and community-sharing sites, both technical and non-technical, for educators to exchange resources and professional learning opportunities.
- Provide professional learning opportunities assist educators in learning how to build partnerships with families to promote students' development of language and early literacy skills.
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society.
- Increase communication and understanding between kindergarten through grade five educators with early education, secondary educators, and higher education stakeholder groups regarding the preparation of educators and California's *SRCL Plan*.
- Move the state literacy plan forward through local organizational structures such as Literacy Professional Communities, which are designed to follow professional learning guidance of the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards for Professional Learning*.
- Integrate literacy instruction into Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement a multi-tiered support system process, such as RtI², including defining an effective system, research-based pedagogy, targeted intervention, state- and district-adopted instructional materials, and assessment within all tiers.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement differentiated and effective strategies and practices to meet the needs of students who traditionally score lower on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities, as well as for high achieving students.

- Establish system-based leadership at the district level to identify learning resources, prioritize needs based on data and teacher input, and provide access to high-quality literacy learning opportunities for kindergarten through grade 5 educators.
- Ensure that administrators have the knowledge and skills needed to support and monitor implementation of curriculum and instruction, including the use of effective literacy instructional practices.
- Embed early literacy, literacy research, and literacy instruction best practices into all teacher and administrator preparation and professional learning programs.

Resources:

Beginning Teachers Support & Assessment (BTSA): <http://www.btsa.ca.gov/>

California Career Technical Education Standards and Framework: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/>

California Standards for the Teaching Profession: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/CSTP-2009.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/te/ce/par03.asp>

Response to Instruction and Intervention: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/Rtiresources.asp>

Response to Intervention (Rtl) and English Learners: Making it Happen:
<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/product/Response-to-Intervention-Rtl-and-English-Learners-Making-it-Happen/9780137048908.page>

Standards for Professional Learning: <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards.cfm>

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Engaging Families and Community

Goal: Ensure multiple opportunities for all families (regardless of home language, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation) to be actively involved and engaged in their children's education.

Objectives:

- Create a welcoming environment, both on and off campus, to deliver the message that family involvement is highly valued and encouraged regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.
- Establish regular opportunities for communication between education staff and families, in home languages as needed.
- Communicate expectations, processes, and program changes to families in a timely manner, especially in regard to reclassification of language levels, in home languages as needed.
- Emphasize parent role in academic language development
- Inform families in a timely fashion of their children's ongoing language and literacy progress and the types of instruction required for each child, in home languages as needed.
- Engage and involve families as active participants in the implementation of an instructional program that is based on current and confirmed research, aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*, and based on a multiple tiered system of support approach, in home languages as needed.
- Strongly encourage and support literacy in students' first languages to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy.
- Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions, as applicable, between pre-kindergarten, elementary grade levels, and into middle school with access to college and career information, in home languages as needed.
- Refer to the *Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts*, as needed, for guidance with engaging families and community.
- Refer to CDE's *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, as needed, to provide families and community members with guidance on quality literature, in home languages as needed.
- Establish online sources for teachers, families, and students to access information to better understand the *CCSS for ELA* literacy standards and the *California ELD standards*, in home languages as needed.

- Offer support to families to ensure that they have access to and understand email and Internet sources that teachers and administrators use to communicate, in home languages as needed.
- Identify and utilize technology (Internet search, multi-media, and online documents) that teachers, school library staff, and public librarians can assist families in accessing, in home languages as needed.

Resources:

Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf

Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/>

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Goal: Provide a timely and efficient system that includes screening, diagnosis, formative, and summative assessments of language development and literacy needs to inform instruction, and provide comprehensive support for each student at the district and site level using California's statewide assessment systems.

Objectives:

- Expand local assessment systems to include longitudinal monitoring of child/student progress using California's statewide assessment systems.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to teachers and administrators to understand formative and summative assessments within the *CCSS for ELA* literacy framework, progress monitoring within the RtI² process, testing accommodations and variations for students with disabilities and English learners, and the timely use of data to inform instruction.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing updated technology, including hardware for computer-based assessment and Web-based data systems, for assessment practices for teachers and administrators to help document student growth longitudinally and to efficiently identify students needing support in language and literacy development.
- Establish ongoing collaboration between administrators and teachers to analyze student assessment data to inform instruction, including regularly scheduled opportunities for RtI² discussions and end-of-the-year grade transition meetings.
- Use formative and summative literacy assessments routinely to gauge student learning and then tailor instruction for personalized learning experiences/differentiate instruction for accelerated as well as struggling students.
- Ensure that educators understand the types and purposes of assessments and know how to analyze and use the data to meet the urgent language and literacy of students who traditionally score lower on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing a multi-tiered system of support for identifying students in need of intervention.
 - Use systematic screening assessments to identify students in need of additional literacy instruction.
 - Establish systematic assessment criteria and procedures that are valid and reliable for English learners and students with disabilities to provide students instruction at Tiers 2 and 3.

- Ensure that educators understand the *CELDT* assessment and local and state requirements for reclassifying fluent English proficient (RFEP) English learners.
- Ensure that educators understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) assessments and assessment requirements.
- Ensure educators can identify and use technology at every level to assist with data collection and analysis.

Resources:

California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp>

California Special Education Services & Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>

State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS):

[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_\(SCASS\).htm](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_(SCASS).htm)

Goals and Objectives: Kindergarten through Grade Five (cont.)

Component: Accountability
Goal: Adopt/maintain a local system of accountability that informs stakeholders about student progress as well as formative assessments that inform instructional decisions, such as those made in RtI2 meetings.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform students and families about the transition to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and development of the new statewide assessment system based on the <i>CCSS</i> in a timely manner.• Establish a plan for the implementation of a Web-based assessment system based on screening, diagnostic, formative, progress monitoring, and new state summative tests aligned to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.• Prepare for and implement technology tools as required by state assessment and accountability programs.• Establish systems using technology to record and analyze progress monitoring data to more efficiently:• Determine the effectiveness of instruction and intervention in order to make any necessary modifications.• Use assessment data to guide instructional planning in Tiers 1, 2, and 3<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Inform the IEP process when a student is eligible for special education.○ Inform the RFEP process and ELD instructors when a student's level of English proficiency changes.○ Inform the planning and implementation of accelerated program instruction when a student's need for services changes.

Resources:

CDE Accountability <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/>

Grade Six through Grade Eight

As an integral part of California's comprehensive literacy plan, this section emphasizes strong language and literacy support for students as they transition from the elementary grades to middle school and from middle school to high school, particularly for students who struggle with reading and writing. The first steps in meeting this goal are to assist LEAs with their efforts to provide high-quality language and literacy support and to strengthen the state's schools by emphasizing the 21st century skills necessary for all students to succeed in K–12 education, college, and career as articulate in the *CCSS for ELA*. The multi-literacies required in the 21st century include technology literacy, the ability to understand multiple perspectives and cultures, and the ability to communicate through multiple languages in a global society.

California's Urgent Need

In recent years, California educators' intensified and consistent efforts have resulted in increased overall student achievement gains on statewide assessments in ELA across all grades and subgroups of students in the middle grades. However, many of California's middle school students still struggle with comprehending academic text. Statewide assessment data indicate that large numbers of English learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged, African American students, and Hispanic students perform below statewide proficiency targets for ELA (see pp. 15, 22). In the middle grades, students with disabilities who participate in the assessments are consistently the lowest performing subgroup (see p. 15). These achievement disparities grow wider as students approach the upper middle grades. Furthermore, according to a 2012 report by the Center on Education Policy, higher-income students consistently outperform lower-income students on the NAEP (Center on Education Policy 2012).

The existence of such wide achievement disparities among student demographic populations emphasizes the need for LEAs to intensify efforts to identify and address the needs of struggling readers not only in the early grades, but well into middle school and beyond. The decreasing rates of proficiency among all students as they progress through the grades suggests that more needs to be done during the middle school years to ensure that students have the literacy skills to comprehend grade level material and to prepare them for the increased academic challenges of high school.

The *CCSS for ELA* require increased focus on strengthening overall academic literacy approaches used by LEAs during the middle school years for all students, especially those who struggle with reading and writing. Increased collaboration between ELA and content-area teachers in middle school benefits all students by promoting literacy activities in all classrooms. If necessary, the services of literacy coaches and reading specialists may be utilized for students who struggle with comprehending discipline-specific text. Strong local literacy plans define strategies for identifying not only individual students, but also persistently underserved subgroups of students to ensure consistency and coherence across the academic program.

The Research

California's past literacy education efforts have focused primarily on professional learning for teachers in reading instruction in the elementary grades. Successful implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* expands this emphasis by defining literacy support for the middle and high school years and by requiring an increased focus on reading and writing informational text in all disciplines. In grades six through eight, students begin to build their skills in reading and writing complex text. The ability to understand the discourse and style of different subjects becomes essential as they progress toward high school.

Although content-area teachers in middle school use many strategies to support their students' growth, current research suggests that students' literacy skills could be enhanced by providing more effective instruction in comprehension strategies, encouraging discussion, setting higher standards, emphasizing the reading-writing connection, and focusing on motivation and engagement. Teaching literacy strategies to access content supports learning of the most essential concepts by all students, especially students who struggle with reading (Torgesen 2007). Reading proficiency in the middle grades is often defined as the ability to understand and learn from grade-level text.

Essential student literacy skills include:

- An ability to read text accurately and fluently
- Background knowledge and vocabulary required to understand the content
- Knowledge and skill in using reading strategies that improve and support understanding
- An ability to think and reason about the information and concepts in the text

- Motivation to understand and learn from text

Establishing a strong local literacy plan is essential for LEAs that serve students in high-poverty areas. Research consistently shows that large disparities in achievement exist between higher-income and lower-income students. According to a 2012 report by the Center on Education Policy, higher-income students consistently outperform lower-income students on the NAEP. At grade eight, reading scores are highest for students not eligible for subsidized lunch and lowest for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch (Center on Education Policy 2012). This fact emphasizes the critical need for LEAs to address the needs of students who struggle with literacy across the disciplines, especially those from underserved subgroups.

The success of middle school students in preparing for college and career is greatly enhanced by strong instruction in kindergarten through grade five. By becoming familiar with the curricular foundations built in elementary school and the expectations in high school, college, and career, middle school teachers will contribute to California's comprehensive literacy goals. Professional learning opportunities must support this articulation.

California's Plan

Despite school funding reductions in recent years, California's student achievement for all subgroups continues to rise when compared to previous years' assessments—a testament to student, teacher, and school leadership's implementation of research-based efforts to raise academic achievement.

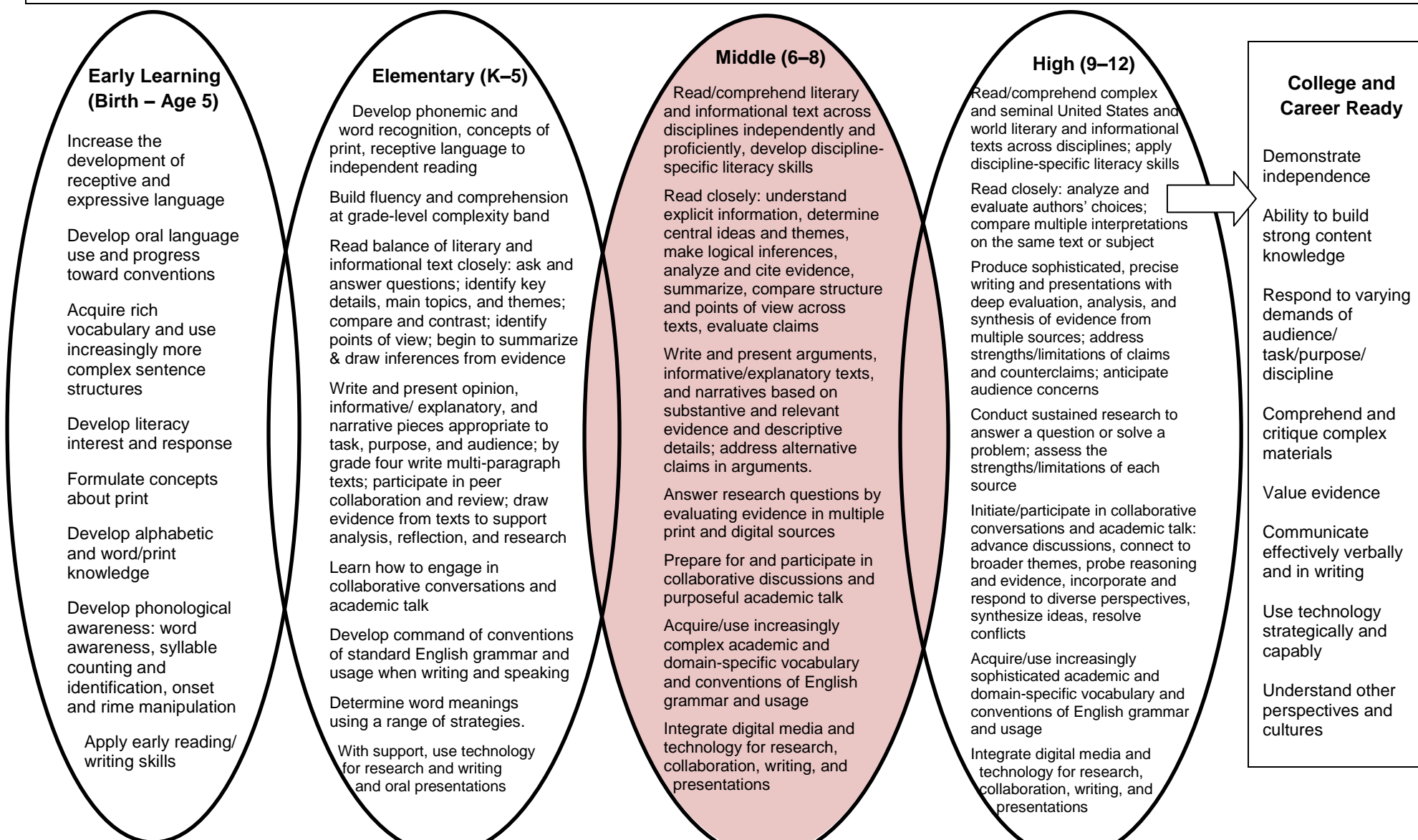
Key documents, such as the 2011 publication *A Blueprint for Great Schools*, offer state and school leadership a foundational agenda for developing a state-of-the-art 21st Century learning system (CDE 2011a). Underpinning these and other efforts to align the resources of the state's educational system is the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* in California's K–12 classrooms.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

The Continuum on the following page outlines the key ideas of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *CCSS for ELA*. This illustrates the connection with and articulation between the developmental spans of children and students, birth through grade twelve.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

Building all aspects of language and literacy for college and career readiness: reading, writing, speaking, and listening from birth through grade twelve.



Core Components: Standards and Frameworks; Articulation and Alignment; Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention; Educator Preparation and professional Learning; Engaging Families and Communities; Assessment and Progress Monitoring; Accountability

Component 1. Standards and Frameworks

State Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve: The recent adoption of the *CCSS for ELA* offers California an opportunity to address middle school student needs in meeting the challenges of rigorous curriculum and preparation to meet the demands of college and career. In conjunction with the new *CCSS*, current legislation requires California to develop new English language arts and mathematics curriculum frameworks, which will be fully aligned to the *Common Core State Standards*. All grade six through eight educators should be knowledgeable about the *CCSS for ELA* and how they compare to the standards adopted in 1997. They should also become familiar with the new *California ELD Standards* and curriculum frameworks.

California's 1997 Content Standards: The California SBE adopted *English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: California's Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* in 1997. The standards describe what students should master in ELA by the end of each grade level. These standards will be replaced by the *CCSS for ELA* by the 2014–15 school year.

Common Core State Standards: In August 2010, the California SBE adopted the *CCSS for ELA*, with California additions. The *CCSS for ELA* are in the process of being included into instructional practices and materials in anticipation of *CCSS*-based assessments scheduled for release in the 2014–2015 school year. The *CCSS for ELA* are presented in four strands: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each strand progresses to a strand-specific set of college and career readiness anchor standards that are identical across all grades and content standards (CDE 2010a). Students who achieve the goals of the standards will be fluent readers, critical thinkers, informative writers, effective speakers, engaged listeners, and will use technology as a source of information and a means of communication.

Given that reading in college and career is most often informational text, the ability to understand the discourse and style of different disciplines becomes critical. It is even more critical when one considers that the *Reading Framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* placed greater importance on reading informational text and decreased the attention on reading literature, poetry, and literary non-fiction, such as speeches and biographies (U.S. Department of Education 2010). In grades six through twelve, the *CCSS for ELA*, which includes the

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, follow NAEP guidance by emphasizing an increased focus on reading informational text both inside and outside the ELA classroom.

The *CCSS for ELA* provide specificity for the application of reading skills to subject-area content, emphasizing increasing text complexity, substantiating written and oral arguments, academic writing, and critical thinking and analysis. The grades six through twelve literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are meant to supplement content standards in those areas, not replace them (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010).

English-Language-Development Standards: In 1999, the California SBE adopted K–12 ELD standards that provide an overview of what English learners should master as they move toward fluency in English. The 1999 ELD standards are aligned to the 1997 ELA content standards and are separated into the domains of listening and speaking, reading, and writing. The levels through which English learners progress are identified as Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. The new *California ELD Standards*, fully aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*, are in the final stages of adoption, scheduled for the fall of 2012.

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve: In 2006, the California SBE adopted the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*. This framework offers a blueprint to LEAs for the implementation of the 1997 ELA content standards and is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/rlafw.pdf>. The standards describe the content students should master by the end of each grade level and form the basis of curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve proficiency (CDE 2007). The new *English-Language Arts/English Language Development Framework* is scheduled for adoption in 2014 and will be aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and the new *California ELD Standards*.

Component 2. Articulated and Aligned Curriculum

Standards describe the content knowledge and skills that students are expected to master by the end of each grade level. The curriculum is the vehicle used to teach the standards and describes what is taught. An effective curriculum is a plan of activities and instructional strategies that engages students, is based on research and grade-appropriate expectations, and is aligned with state education policy.

Knowledge and collaboration among educators around the continuum of learning that students experience as they transition through critical academic stages help to ensure that all students succeed. Educators at all levels should possess the knowledge and skills to help their students succeed in each stage of learning, to ensure vertical articulation and cohesive curriculum alignment between same-grade classrooms and preceding and successive grades, and to enable successful transitions.

Articulated Curriculum: Systematic, vertical articulation practices among educators in elementary, middle, and high school programs are essential to successfully transition all students into each successive academic level. To ensure a comprehensive pathway through the grades, effective local literacy plans will focus on the entire scope of the *CCSS for ELA* from kindergarten through grade twelve and establish strong vertical articulation practices. School leaders should encourage and facilitate articulation and collaboration among all middle school teachers to help students move through major academic transitions. The 2012 CDE publication, *A Look at Grades Seven and Eight in California Public Schools: Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics* and *A Look at Kindergarten through Grade Six in California Public Schools* (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp>) include a comprehensive overview of *CCSS for ELA* grade-level expectations (CDE 2012).

To ensure successful transitions, all middle school educators should be familiar with the *CCSS for ELA* requirements of each preceding and following grade. Understanding neighboring standard requirements in the same or similar academic disciplines, along with the associated curriculum frameworks and the *California ELD Standards*, is essential for teachers participating in major grade transitions such as grade five to grade six and grade eight to grade nine.

Aligned Curriculum: The *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools* supports 6–8 educators in implementing high-quality curriculum practices that provide students with the knowledge and skills described in the *ELA Content Standards*. A new K–12 curriculum framework, fully aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*, is currently being developed to facilitate curriculum design and implementation of the *CCSS for ELA*. The *CCSS for ELA* support school leaders and teachers in their efforts to foster the academic development of all students in California, including English learners and students with disabilities or other special needs.

Key Features of the *CCSS for ELA* Key features and student expectations within the *CCSS for ELA* for grades six through eight include:

Reading Literature and Reading Informational Text: To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. By reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these subjects that will also give them the necessary disciplinary skills to prepare for high school. The *CCSS for ELA* for the middle grades require students to:

- Read closely for explicit information and make logical inferences, evaluate and cite evidence, determine and analyze central ideas and themes, and summarize
- Interpret words and phrases, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings; analyze word choices, structure, point of view and purpose
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, delineate and evaluate argument and claims, and analyze how multiple texts address similar themes or topics
- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently

Writing: Students in the middle grades produce writing appropriate to task and purpose, and write over extended timeframes. The *CCSS for ELA* focus on different types of writing: composing argument, informational/explanatory, and narrative pieces. The writing standards require students to:

- Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; develop and strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach
- Use technology to produce and publish writing, cite sources, and to interact and collaborate with others
- Conduct research based on focused questions, gather relevant information from multiple sources, assess credibility and accuracy, and integrate information while avoiding plagiarism
- Move from writing opinions in elementary school to developing arguments with claims and counterclaims based on evidence
- Apply grade-level reading standards to literature and informational texts to draw evidence to support analysis, reflection, and research

Speaking and Listening: In the middle grades the *CCSS for ELA* expand the requirements of participating in collaborative conversations and preparing formal presentations by expecting students to:

- Prepare for collegial discussions with research, questions, and knowledge of their rules and patterns
- Listen critically, analyze and evaluate information and arguments presented in diverse media and formats, refine views as needed to account for new evidence expressed by others
- Deliver well-developed argumentative, narrative, and informative/explanatory presentations, using multimedia and visual aids as appropriate

Language: Students in the middle grades learn and demonstrate command of language use and function and continually expand vocabulary when listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Explicit and direct vocabulary instruction is an area of additional emphasis. Attention to precision in vocabulary choices to aid in comprehension is a major focus in the *CCSS for ELA*, including the accurate use of both academic and discipline-specific words and phrases and independence in building vocabulary knowledge. The *CCSS for ELA* in the middle grades require students to:

- Demonstrate a command of English language conventions in the student's use of phrases, clauses, and compound and complex sentences during oral and written communication

- Exhibit increased aptitude in determining word meanings, using figurative and nuanced language, and acquiring increasingly complex academic and domain-specific vocabulary

To provide students with a strong foundation for college and career readiness, the middle grades curriculum must be intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades and subject areas. As implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* proceeds, it is critical that all stakeholders understand the essential literacy components stressed in the new standards and the changes and expectations for both students and teachers, to ensure that all students have access to the core curriculum.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* include specific expectations for history/social studies that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading*, but vary to include specific history/social studies expectations for middle school students such as:

- Citing specific evidence from and analyzing historical primary and secondary sources
- Differentiating how perspectives vary in multiple primary and secondary sources, and detecting biases
- Determining how texts present information through causality, sequence, or comparison, such as examining steps in legislative and economic processes
- Distinguishing among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a source

Reading Standards for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* includes specific expectations for science and technical subjects that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading*, but vary to include specific science and technical subject expectations for middle school students such as:

- Citing specific evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts
- Following multi-step procedures when experimenting, measuring, or performing technical tasks
- Determining the meaning of domain-specific vocabulary in science and technical subjects

- Analyzing author's purpose in explanations, procedures, or experiments described in text
- Integrating quantitative and technical information to explicate visual charts, diagrams, graphs, or tables

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* promote writing across the curriculum and include specific expectations for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing*. As in ELA classrooms, students in content-area classrooms are expected to write routinely over short and extended time frames, conduct research projects, gather and evaluate evidence, and produce clear and coherent writing. However, the topics, style, vocabulary, and use and analysis of evidence will differ by discipline. Additionally, while emphasis is placed on writing discipline-specific arguments and informative/explanatory pieces, writing narratives is not included as a standard.

Component 3. Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention

Instruction refers to the methods and strategies used to teach a curriculum. In a well-articulated system, aligned with foundations and standards, curriculum and instruction together connect students' language and literacy learning on a balanced continuum from infancy through grade twelve. To accomplish a seamless pathway for all students, California is aligning all of its recommended instructional resources and materials to the *CCSS for ELA*.

A rich, student-centered learning environment where teachers interact responsively with students to develop their language and literacy skills is critical to success in middle school and to prepare students for the major academic challenges they will encounter in high school. The CDE maintains a system of literacy support for LEAs by providing research-based publications, technical assistance, professional learning resources, review of standards-aligned curricular materials and resources, and research-based instructional methodology recommendations.

Reading instruction in middle school should be integrated into a coordinated, comprehensive, schoolwide approach to ensure that all students can read and learn from academic text, including content-area textbooks and literature, and that they will be motivated to engage in reading for many different purposes (Centon 2007). A school wide approach should be designed to meet the needs of all students by providing them with instruction specifically designed to help them comprehend the complex vocabulary and content of academic text and to increase their motivation to read. The following elements are essential if middle school students are to be successful at learning from text.

- A solid foundation of high standards, strong leadership, instructional excellence, and a safe and positive school environment
- Common instructional routines and strategies implemented across disciplines (i.e., math, history-social science, science, English language arts) to teach students discipline-specific vocabulary and practices for comprehending disciplinary academic text
- Strategic instruction provided in reading classes or intervention settings
- Intensive intervention for students with more serious reading difficulties

In middle school curriculum, standards-based instruction is critical to develop students' literacy and proficiency in ELA to set them on a path to become lifelong readers and effective communicators (CDE 2011e). The challenge for educators is to organize and deliver effective, efficient instruction in the essential skills and concepts that students must master as they progress through the grades. When planning literacy activities and instruction, all middle school educators should be familiar with the following concepts, practices, and resources:

Standards-Based Instruction: *The Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools* elaborates on the content standards by not only providing a curricular framework, but also describing the types of instruction necessary to help all students—including English learners and students with disabilities—achieve proficiency in ELA. The framework addresses reading, writing, listening, speaking, and written and oral English-language conventions for learners from kindergarten through grade twelve. The framework also offers extensive guidance in planning and implementing instruction that is grounded in research (CDE 2007). The 2007 version will be updated in 2014 to align with the *CCSS for ELA* and will include the new *California ELD Standards*.

At each grade level, the framework also provides the basis for establishing criteria used for evaluating instructional materials. The SBE's Instructional Quality Commission will guide the revision of existing curriculum frameworks and evaluation criteria to align to the *CCSS for ELA*, with California additions, for both mathematics and ELA. The ELA framework and instructional materials for kindergarten through grade eight will include the new *California ELD Standards*, strategies for developing literacy through other disciplines (e.g., history-social science and science), and strategies to

address the needs of students with disabilities. The curricula that the SBE adopts will provide LEAs with many options to select standards-aligned textbooks, instructional materials, and intensive intervention programs to best meet their students' instructional needs.

An additional resource is the *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade* list (2011f), available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/r/l/ll/>. This Web-based, searchable database provides a collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents that reflect the complex types of text students should be reading at school and outside of class. Selected literature titles are matched to the *CCSS for ELA* in an effort to support teachers, students, parents, and other education stakeholders in linking literacy to discipline-specific instruction.

High-quality Reading Instruction emphasizes and includes:

Systematic, explicit instruction: A systematic and comprehensive curriculum provides a strategic sequence of instruction and a consistent instructional format. Studies show that curricula that embody these elements consistently produce larger achievement gains. Empirical evidence demonstrates that systematic and explicit instruction improves reading comprehension. Examples of strategies include establishing clear instructional targets, modeling, guided and independent practice with corrections, and instruction-embedded assessments. Middle school content-area teachers may need additional support in learning how to teach students various comprehension strategies that ELA teachers use, such as summarizing text and generating and answering questions (Stockard 2011).

Vocabulary development: Middle school students are continuing to develop their vocabulary knowledge and skills in more sophisticated ways, including through their own research and by reading informational texts in content areas with increasing levels of text complexity (CDE 2011e). In middle school, students should be able to acquire and apply a full and complex range of lifelong language and literacy skills, and teachers must be prepared to provide instruction that fully recognizes and supports this critical stage of learning. To meet the challenges of the *CCSS for ELA* the approach to essential vocabulary instruction for middle school, which is often rooted in disciplinary texts, will need to be reviewed. Multiple research studies (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000 and Kamil et al. 2008) conclude that explicit instruction improves vocabulary and comprehension, indicating that educators, especially those working with adolescent students, need to gain a better understanding of instructional practices related to vocabulary.

Discussion around text: As text complexity increases, adolescent learners need to learn to expand discussion around text. This focus is another clear shift from how comprehension is currently taught. Discussion or “unpacking what the text says,” rather than describing feelings about the text, will achieve the ultimate goal of understanding meaning before moving to critique and analysis.

Extracting arguments and providing evidence: Another factor to consider are the latest results from the NAEP Reading Assessment, which show that the skills that separate advanced readers from other students are the abilities to extract the argument from the text and provide evidence to support the response.

Motivation and engagement: Students who are motivated and engaged have higher learning outcomes. Motivation is often defined as the general attraction to a task, and engagement is the amount of time and effort that will be put forth in the task. Teachers should be knowledgeable about research-based instructional strategies and learning opportunities that promote student motivation and engagement. There needs to be a clear distinction between entertaining students and providing highly engaging activities that are closely connected to grade-level learning goals and objectives (Kamil 2008).

Students entering middle school without grade-level fluency and proficiency in reading comprehension require intensive intervention and increased instructional time to address skills and strategies to independently read and comprehend grade-level text. Due to the great variation in needs of middle school students, instruction may require intervention with specialists who diagnose and plan for remediation with proven interventions. Intervention pathways such as RtI², with concrete criteria and a referral process outlined in a local literacy plan, will assist educators in guiding instruction that supports student learning needs.

High-quality Writing Instruction emphasizes and includes (CDE 2012):

- Writing from sources, so that students will be able to use evidence from multiple media texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information.
- Cultivation of argumentative and informative/explanatory writing based on conclusions drawn from evidence and analysis.

- Integration of speaking and listening skills to allow students to improve their writing draft revisions through effective engagement in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners. Through discussions, students can build on others' ideas and learn to clearly express their own.

As with reading, students entering middle school grades without grade-level abilities in writing, speaking, and listening may require intensive intervention and increased instructional time. Within the LEA's referral processes for interventions, specific attention to the needs of struggling students and special populations, such as EL and special education students, must be incorporated.

Universal Design for Learning: Students learn in a variety of ways and the philosophy of universal design for learning (UDL), which can be enabled by technology, is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. UDL reduces barriers in instruction; provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges and UDL maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are English learners (U.S. Department of Education 2011).

UDL empowers educators to design flexible educational environments by allowing for:

- Multiple means of representation—gives learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- Multiple means of expression—provides learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- Multiple means of engagement—taps into learner interests, challenges them appropriately, and motivates them to learn

UDL is a highly successful framework for designing educational environments that enable all learners to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. The implementation of UDL increases learning outcomes and provides rich supports for learning (Center for Applied Special Technology 2011).

Multi-tiered System of Support: Well-planned, differentiated literacy instruction increases success in meeting the wide range of students' abilities. Developing educator awareness of research-based interventions, when to use them, and, based on individual student needs, which interventions are most effective for struggling readers, students with

disabilities, and English learners is essential. Examples of strategies for differentiating instruction include adjusting pacing, complexity, novelty, and depth (CDE 2011e). When systematically planned differentiation strategies are used in the classroom, students with a wide range of abilities, including those with special needs, can benefit from appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction while still accessing the core content.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²): In 2008, California adopted a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, which was subsequently expanded to become Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) to emphasize general education's responsibility for implementing high-quality instruction, positive behavioral strategies, and early intervention instructional approaches school wide. Effective use of RtI² strategies helps to identify students who are at risk of academic failure, ensuring these students are offered appropriate interventions. The use of RtI² processes benefits all students, but is essential for struggling readers and for students who have identified disabilities.

RtI² processes help prevent academic failure in the middle grades through early and research-based instructional interventions and frequent progress monitoring. Effective use of this approach ensures that struggling students receive a comprehensive curriculum that integrates language and literacy development in all disciplines and builds upon the language and knowledge strengths that they possess. In addition, successful implementation of RtI² in general education may reduce the percentage of unnecessary placements of students into special education programs and help identify students who need accelerated rates of instruction.

The RtI² process emphasizes three instructional strategies:

- High-quality first teaching in every grade and discipline
- Early screening and identification of language and literacy instructional needs
- Differentiated instruction and intervention when necessary for remediation or acceleration

Administrators and leadership teams, in collaboration with teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day-to-day use of the RtI² approach. Analysis of how students respond to literacy instruction and interventions is an organizing principle for structures and programs that already exist in schools. Implementing RtI² promotes collaboration and shared responsibility among educators and families for the literacy

advancement of all students (CDE 2011h).

The RtI² process generally uses a three-tiered approach:

- Tier 1: Core instruction is rigorous, relevant, aligned with standards, and differentiated to accommodate students' individual needs. Tier 1 provides the foundation of a systemic RtI² approach across age and grade levels. Systematic screening, along with diagnostic and progress-monitoring assessments, provides data to guide instruction and identify students who may be struggling with grade-level reading or content, or those who need accelerated instruction. Teachers provide universal access and differentiated instruction in small flexible groups during core classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Tier 2: Supplemental, small-group instruction is provided in addition to instruction in the core curriculum. Instruction addresses specific skills that are essential for grade-level competency. At this level, students who are not making adequate progress in the core curriculum are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs, based on their performance and rates of progress. In particular, linguistic attention to English learners and standard-English learners becomes essential in providing appropriate interventions.
- Tier 3: Intensive instruction accelerates learning for students who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and intervention. At this level, students may receive individualized, intensive interventions that target skill deficits for accelerated remediation of existing learning needs and the prevention of more severe learning needs. Replacement curriculum for the core curriculum or different settings may be included but should be used judiciously and based on multiple measures of assessments.

At each tier, instruction should be high quality, based on research-proven strategies, and aligned with state-adopted standards. Progress monitoring assessments provide vital information to make informed decisions for instruction across the tiers to better meet the needs of individual students. Data gathered from RtI² can be utilized in the identification process to determine if a student requires special education services and allows educators and families to make informed decisions about instructional or program placement. The collaborative, data-based, decision-making, and problem-solving process among all stakeholders involved with a child is vital to the implementation of RtI². Additional information about RtI² is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/index.asp>.

Literacy needs of special populations: The use of multiple strategies is required to meet the needs of struggling readers, students with disabilities, English learners, students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with combinations of special instructional needs (CDE 2011e). Ideally, local literacy plans should specifically address the needs of these special populations, and educators must ensure that all students have universal access to the core curriculum.

When planning for universal access, educators should: utilize frequent progress-monitoring assessments; engage in careful planning and organization; differentiate instruction to meet students' instructional needs; employ flexible grouping strategies; enlist help from others; and use technology or other instructional devices. Some students may require intervention services that involve attention to specific reading skills and instruction at the appropriate levels of difficulty (CDE 1999).

In developing a plan, LEAs should focus specifically on the needs of the middle school students who consistently underperform on statewide assessments, including the following populations:

Socioeconomically disadvantaged: Students who live in low-income households may face several learning challenges. Students facing severe economic hardship may have nutritional concerns, inconsistent or inadequate housing arrangements, parents or guardians with limited literacy skills, and other outside influences that may significantly impact their learning performance. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students cross all racial and ethnic groups, may also be English learners or students with disabilities, and are often clustered or isolated in schools or entire districts.

Educators should be knowledgeable of the unique needs of all students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and should also seek resources and information to understand and provide high-quality instruction to students belonging to the predominant racial and ethnic groups in their districts and schools. Students' learning supports and experiences outside of school should be considered if their academic achievement is impacted by these factors, and additional supports at school should be promptly implemented when necessary.

Students with disabilities: An essential next step for California educators is to more fully integrate an RtI² approach in general education as a way to prevent academic failure and ensure more accurate identification and placement of students who need special education services. It is essential that all teachers are equipped with the knowledge to make equitable and timely referral and eligibility decisions to special education, including evidence of a student's lack of positive response to high-quality instruction in general education.

Educators working with students in special education should utilize intensive and research-based methods to teach literacy and should also be knowledgeable of best-practice teaching strategies for English learners with special needs. Effective local literacy plans emphasize strong collaboration between special education and general education teachers, as well as English learner specialists, reading specialists, and literacy coaches, to adequately address the literacy needs and increase reading achievement of all students with disabilities.

English learners: The 2010 CDE publication, *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches* provides instructional recommendations for language and literacy development of English learners. Incorporating guidelines from this publication into a local literacy plan is another avenue to encourage all teachers to stay current with ongoing research in the field.

Research-based instructional practices have been shown to have positive effects on increased progress toward English proficiency for English learners. Instructional strategies include: activating and strengthening students' background knowledge, promoting oral interactions and extending students' academic conversations, repeating key ideas and their associated domain-specific language, explicitly teaching grammatical structures and functions, and academic language (Echevarria and Vogt 2011). Frequent progress monitoring is essential to ensure that instruction has been successful.

For English learners to benefit from universal access to the curriculum, teachers may need additional support to plan instruction, differentiate curriculum, infuse instruction with specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) techniques, and use grouping strategies effectively. Instruction across disciplines should be promoted despite low literacy or limited proficiency in the English language, along with the critical-thinking and analytical skills and the particular reading strategies of the disciplines (CDE 2011e).

Educators are encouraged to promote biliteracy and multiculturalism in the classroom and maintain a culturally responsive approach during interactions with students, tapping into students' background knowledge to guide and enhance instruction. Educators should understand the role that primary language literacy plays in overall academic achievement and the differences between “basic interpersonal communicative skills” or high-functioning social language and “cognitive academic language proficiency” needed for success in higher education and careers (CDE 2010d). It is critical educators address the needs of long-term English learners who lack the academic language skills to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (Californians Together 2010). Understanding these broad concepts and applying appropriate instructional strategies are critical to improving the learning outcomes of English learners, especially as they approach high school.

Students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: Culture shapes a person's beliefs, values, and morals. In the United States, the education system has historically deculturalized Native American, African American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican students as well as students from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia (Gay 2010). Culturally responsive teaching means developing an instructional environment for students that validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires, and motivates learning.

Culturally responsive instructional elements include:

- Standards-based teaching with culturally responsive literature
- Systematic teaching of situational appropriateness
- Building on cultural behaviors to create positive classroom communities
- Expansion of academic vocabulary instruction using conceptually coded words
- Creating an inviting learning environment for student success, purposeful use of texts that affirm and validate the backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences of the students
- Building an understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of Standard English as differentiated from the home language

- Providing an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment

Most importantly, although students may not come from the same cultural or linguistic background as the teacher that difference does not mean the students have fewer abilities. Coming to school with different cultural and background references, having different interests, learning differently, and/or processing information in multiple ways are traits possessed by all children. By being more reflective and understanding students' diverse cultural backgrounds, linguistic needs, and learning styles educators can become more aware of how they teach, how students learn, and how to increase their own instructional effectiveness for teaching all students (Terry and Irving 2010).

Effective Use of Technology: The *CCSS for ELA* and California's current digital initiatives stress the importance of using technology in the classroom to assist in meeting the needs and increasing the achievement of all students. Effective use of technology targets specific learning tasks and is informed by research-based, best-practice methods. The *CCSS for ELA* emphasize the use of technology as an integral part of instruction, learning, and assessment, as well as analysis of data to track student progress and guide instructional and program decisions. The increased focus on technology and data require comprehensive and ongoing participation of all educators to encourage and promote a digital-age learning culture and facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (International Society for Technology in Education 2007).

The increased focus on technology will include each of the following stakeholders in middle school communities:

- School leaders—to manage and compare data to identify model learning environments and target areas in need of intervention or reform
- Teachers—to document learning and track progress, as well as serve as an instructional and assessment tool to support learner-centered practices
- Students—to use technology as a learning tool for practice, research, and collaboration

An important first step is for all educators and students to have equal access to current technology and understand how to use it. The use of technology that supports the instructional goals and district-adopted curriculum will prepare students for increasingly complex life and work environments where technical skills will be required. Giving middle school students

meaningful purposes to think critically, problem solve, communicate, and collaborate using available technology will increase their ability to understand and use technology tools well in high school, college, and career. The potential of both existing and new technologies in supporting student learning is not in the technologies themselves but the ways they are used as tools for learning (Marzano and Pickering 2003).

LEAs are encouraged to place a strong emphasis on technology use to support 21st century learning by including these practices in a local literacy plan:

- Develop a plan to increase educator and student knowledge and use of technology as an integral part of instruction and learning.
- Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction and ensures that both teachers and students acquire 21st century technology skills.
- Enable educators to plan strategically and integrate technology use into the classroom in innovative and meaningful ways that model digital-age work and learning.
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society.
- Encourage teachers to continuously improve professional practices and exhibit leadership in school and professional communities by promoting and demonstrating the effective use of digital tools and resources for literacy development.

Currently teachers, with an understanding of technology, design effective and productive student learning opportunities such as engaging students in critical analysis of digital media, or assigning students to use the Internet to develop information technology literacy skills. Instruction for students in comprehending multimedia “text”—which involves accepting an expanded definition of text, reading, and literacy—is a key information technology literacy skill. Students also need to understand how to assign credibility to different media when conducting online research. These skills are important for middle school students as they explore career and college opportunities.

LEAs are encouraged to place a strong emphasis to make technology integration a priority and incorporate its use in a principled, research-based way, rather than following trends. Educators at all levels should be equipped to:

- Incorporate technology skills to support 21st century instruction, learning, and home communication
- Develop electronic hubs for information and resources for teachers and families
- Develop and utilize teacher Web sites to support school to home communications
- Utilize online grade books
- Participate in technology-based assessment
- Collaborate on data analysis and interpretation

Due to the varying skill levels and comfort using technology to support student learning, teachers are encouraged to exhibit leadership and initiative by providing and engaging in cross training with peers in an ongoing culture of collaboration and learning.

Disciplinary Literacy: The adoption of the *CCSS for ELA* brings additional challenges to middle school history-social science, science, and technical subjects educators. Content-area teachers have long used many successful strategies to support their students' growth in academic literacy. Research suggests that these strategies can be further enhanced by providing more effective instruction in the following ways (Torgesen 2007):

Comprehension strategies—Incorporating practices that promote the use of effective reading strategies before, during, and after reading. Comprehension strategies are skills students can apply to improve their understanding and learning from text.

Discussion—Providing opportunities for deeper, more sustained discussion of content from text. Extended discussions can be facilitated by the teacher, or can occur as structured discussions among students in cooperative learning groups.

High standards—Setting and maintaining high standards for the level of text, conversation, questions, and vocabulary in discussions and in reading and writing assignments.

Reading/writing connection—Strengthening the reading-writing connection to improve student opportunities to reflect on the meaning of text and receive feedback on their reflections.

Motivation and engagement—Creating more engaging and motivating classrooms and interacting with students in a way that promotes internal motivation for reading. Students will learn to process text more deeply if reading is relevant to their lives, with meaningful learning goals, in an atmosphere that supports initiative and personal choice.

Content learning—Using instructional methods, such as graphic organizers or concept comparison routines that deepen understanding and show students better ways of learning new content on their own. While subject-area teachers cannot be expected to teach struggling readers basic reading skills, they can teach strategies, use appropriate instructional routines, lead and facilitate discussions, raise standards, and create engaging learning environments that help students improve their ability to comprehend text and understand discipline-specific discourse.

Although the *CCSS for ELA* bring changes and some challenges to middle school educators, the new standards incorporate many instructional recommendations that California teachers have been using successfully for years. Continued professional learning and staff collaboration will ensure that all teachers are successful implementing current research-based, best practice methods and practices for all students.

Component 4. Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

California is in the process of developing a comprehensive system of improved educator preparation and professional learning guidelines and resources that are aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) is revising credentialing requirements to align with the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*. Practicing educators are encouraged to participate in trainings to become familiar with the new standards, revised curriculum frameworks, and assessment requirements. At the local level, districts and schools are encouraged to develop educator learning plans that include literacy instruction as a core component.

At the heart of any educator learning plan is strong and cohesive leadership. To successfully implement the new

standards and increase student academic achievement, district and school leaders need to engage teachers in ongoing professional learning to stay informed of current research and best practices in literacy instruction and assessment. To ensure effectiveness, professional learning should become a system-wide priority at the district level— not simply a strategy for individual educator growth (Learning Forward 2011). Key to the success of any professional learning initiative at the district level is a system based on research, collaboration, learning resources, and access to high quality learning opportunities on an ongoing basis.

The establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on literacy at the local level is an effective way for LEAs to improve student achievement and instructional practice. Small group LPLCs should focus on:

- Defining challenges
- Identifying solution strategies
- Implementing strategies identified
- Assessing results
- Defining additional challenges

Ongoing and strong collaboration among key stakeholders will enhance the work of professional learning communities and help to ensure visibility and a strong commitment to improving literacy achievement on a system-wide level.

Providing infrastructure supports to schools and teachers remains the responsibility of districts and school leaders. Education leaders must provide teachers, to the best of their ability, access to books and materials, technology, professional learning, and other resources. These variables have direct bearing on achievement and need to be attended to if students are expected to be successful academically.

Statewide Professional Learning Initiatives: Past professional learning initiatives have positively affected instructional practices and increased the capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and meet the needs of struggling readers; however, a significant number of students in middle school require specific language and literacy instruction to meet their learning needs. The implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* provides an opportunity for LEAs to

emphasize professional learning to target student interventions, based on proven research, and support students with low-literacy skills identified through established criteria such as the criteria described in the RtI² process.

In 2011, the California legislature enacted a requirement for the CDE to develop a series of interactive professional learning modules on topics related to the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA*. By the end of 2012, school leaders and teachers will be able to electronically access a variety of resources pertaining to specific topics within each module for independent learning or onsite training workshops. The learning modules will incorporate specific strategies for literacy instruction in all grade spans and disciplines.

In 2012, the SSPI established an Educator Excellence Task Force, representing a joint effort between the CDE and the CTC to strengthen the California teacher corps. The Educator Excellence Task Force produced the *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* report that includes recommendations to:

- Develop comprehensive recruitment, training and preparation frameworks for both new and experienced educators
- Encourage the development of more effective educator evaluation systems
- Ensure that these systems are supported by training for evaluators, mentoring for teachers, and professional learning programs
- Recommend how these systems should be designed, supported, and implemented

Recognizing the central role that teachers and school leaders have in improving student learning, the Educator Excellence Task Force provided recommendations to ensure California's teachers are consistently well-prepared and well-supported and continue to have opportunities to grow throughout their careers. Additional information about the task force is available on the CDE Educator Excellence Task Force Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ee.asp>.

Support for Professional Learning: California's commitment to professional learning will consist of supports to middle school leaders and teachers including, but not limited to:

- Integration of the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*, aligned to the *CCSS*
- *CCSS for ELA* implementation support resources, including implementation guides and professional learning modules, that incorporate research-based instructional practices and strategies that address the learning needs of all students
- Guidance and support for the organization of intervention processes in a tiered approach as suggested by the RtI² process
- Guidance and support for the implementation of site-based, collaborative approach to data analysis that addresses individual student needs, analyzes items and errors, and measures student growth through multiple assessment measures
- Guidance and support for the integration of technology into daily curriculum and home communication

California has adopted rigorous educator standards to guide coursework and expectations in administrator and teacher education programs. California's educator standards require these programs to base content and instruction upon state and nationally recognized criteria to help develop and support outstanding educators.

Educator Standards: Standards for educator knowledge serve as important guides for the content of state certification programs and professional learning course offerings. The CTC awards credentials and certificates on the basis of completion of programs that meet standards for educator preparation and competence. For each type of professional credential in education, the CTC has developed and adopted standards based upon recent research and expert advice of professional educators (CTC 2008). Such standards focus on knowledge of both content and pedagogy.

California bases its **educator preparation** on one comprehensive set of standards:

Common Standards: The CTC has developed and adopted standards for each type of professional credential in education, which are based upon recent research and the expert advice of many professional educators. Each standard specifies a level of quality and effectiveness that the CTC requires from programs offering academic and

professional preparation in education. When a new program is proposed, an institution submits a Common Standards Addendum to address how the new program will integrate with the already approved programs (CTC 2008).

California bases its **professional learning** guidance on two sets of standards:

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession: This 2009 publication was jointly developed by the CTC and the CDE. These standards set forth the expectations for current classroom teachers and provide them with a common language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the profession by which all teachers can define and develop their practice. The standards are not regulations that control the specific actions of teachers, but instead act as guides for teachers as they develop, refine, and extend their practice (CTC 2009).

The Standards for Professional Learning: In 2011, the *National Staff Development Council Standards* were revised into a new publication called the *Standards for Professional Learning*. Developed by Learning Forward, with extensive contributions from professional and education organizations, the standards define the essential elements and conditions needed for professional learning that lead to more effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The standards emphasize that the fundamental purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward 2011).

Increased focus on and dissemination of educator standards will help to ensure that future and current school leaders and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the *CCSS for ELA* and help all students reach their maximum potential. Education leaders and teachers should review the new educator standards within a collaborative team, carefully reflect on the implications of the standards for their county, district, or school and begin to develop a system-wide professional learning plan (Learning Forward 2011).

Expanded Learning: The *SRCL Plan* emphasizes the continuum of learning that occurs from birth through grade twelve. Many progressive middle schools schedule common teacher prep time for teams every day or alternate days so that team members can plan together, grade common assessments, and prepare for lessons on the pacing guide. These common planning times are also valuable for lesson studies. This built in planning time is an effective way to ensure participation by teachers and can assist in developing. Some other recommendations to build a continuum of learning follow:

- Incorporate the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards* into lessons and units of instruction in ELA and subject-area courses
- Align curriculum from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school
- Research and use best practices in literacy instruction
- Meet the literacy needs of special populations, including students with disabilities, English learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students
- Challenge for high-achievers and increase expectations for all students
- Increase understanding of cultural sensitivity for educators and students and reducing socioeconomic barriers
- Implement state policy and requirements
- Organize intervention processes using a multi-tiered approach (such as RtI²) to meet the diverse needs of all students
- Use technology effectively
- Conduct family outreach activities to communicate and collaborate about ways to support language and literacy learning and development
- Implement literacy instruction in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs

Measuring Learning Outcomes: Ongoing measurements of educator learning, including evaluations and observational activities to measure understanding and use of learned strategies, are essential to ensure preparation and professional learning objectives are met with additional support provided, as needed.

Educator Collaboration: As emphasized throughout this plan, educator collaboration is a critical element to any successful literacy plan. Multiple opportunities exist for increased staff collaboration on literacy efforts, and professional learning on this topic is highly recommended, especially for district and school leaders as they formulate local literacy plans. Existing programs such as the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and the Peer Assistance and

Review (PAR) are examples of highly effective collaborative support systems that are currently in place in California. In addition, educators can participate in ongoing collaboration and peer learning through social networks, education blogs, and initiatives such as the California Brokers of Expertise Project. This CDE sponsored Web site is available at <http://www.myboe.org/>. Education leaders are encouraged to utilize these resources, as well as any new learning support initiatives at the local level.

Increased communication across early childhood education, K–12 education, and higher education stakeholder groups, along with increased articulation across the grade spans, will be vital to the success of California’s statewide literacy efforts. The desired outcome of this communication is an effective and aligned plan that will be implemented statewide. The *SRCL* team will continue to share research and resources related to teacher preparation and professional learning to support literacy instruction aligned to the *CCSS for ELA* in all grades and disciplines, including ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Component 5. Engaging Families and Communities

California is poised to implement a connected, comprehensive system of literacy foundations and standards from infancy through grade twelve that includes families and communities as strong partners. Using the standards, foundations, and strong partnerships, instruction at the local level will more effectively address the needs of all students, including those belonging to historically underperforming subgroups, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Improved communication and collaboration with families and communities are keys to the success of any local literacy plan.

Family Involvement and Support: Involving families as partners in the literacy development of students is an integral part of a seamless support system. To fully support a comprehensive, articulated, and aligned system families must become aware of the expectations that will be required of their children as they move through the K–12 system. During the middle school years, families need to become familiar with the rigor that their children will experience in preparation for high school and need multiple opportunities to participate as active partners in their children’s education.

Active family involvement, along with effective outreach and parent education opportunities, are essential to increase academic skills among young adolescent students. To effectively involve families as partners, school leaders should:

- Emphasize ongoing communication between school and home in English and the home language, as needed
- Create a welcoming environment at school to encourage family involvement as partners in learning
- Utilize multiple mediums for communication, including technology, and provide alternative means if family does not have access to technology
- Provide services in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner
- Encourage parent education and promote involvement in school, home, and community activities that promote family literacy
- Encourage and support literacy in a student's first language (if other than English) to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy
- Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school

Beginning with effective and frequent communication between district and school offices and the homes of students, communication with families must allow for frequent interactions with their children's teachers and knowledge of classroom expectations and progress toward meeting performance goals. School leaders and teachers must ensure that families receive easily accessible information and learning opportunities to support the language and literacy development of their children, including, but not limited to:

- Progress toward achieving mastery of the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*, if applicable
- The types of student assessments
- The RtI² instructional approach
- The role of technology in instruction
- Self-paced and self-selected independent reading
- Academic vocabulary

School leaders must also ensure opportunities for active involvement of English learners and students with disabilities and their families by providing information on the school's targeted services, programs, assessments, student progress, and longitudinal test data. Parents of English learners must have knowledge of the criteria and process for reclassification from English learner to fluent English proficient and the importance of English proficiency to their children's academic success and readiness for college and career. Parents must also understand the specific lack of literacy proficiency that may prevent reclassification.

The 2011CDE publication, *Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts*, helps school districts engage families in their children's education. The Framework, produced in collaboration with the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd is outlined in a way to help school districts evaluate their progress and plan for improvements and emphasizes the strong link between parental involvement activities and student achievement. The Framework provides specific examples of what schools, communities, and parents can do to help students succeed. The publication also contains a list of articles that school administrators and teachers can read to create effective, research-based practices in family engagement (CDE 2011g). This document is available on the WestEd Web site at http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf.

Community Involvement and Support: Multiple opportunities exist for middle school educators to reach out to community organizations for support and collaboration. Primarily, middle school leaders should maintain contact with the feeder elementary schools and high schools that serve the same student population to establish mutual goals and support to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions.

Additional community partners include grant makers that invest in mutual educational projects; corporate sponsors; professional organizations and collaborative projects; community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, adult and parent education programs; and other local supporters of child development, literacy, and learning.

To increase community involvement and collaboration, middle school educators may:

- Increase collaborative efforts between elementary and high school educators to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions

- Seek public, private, foundation, or corporate grants for literacy program support from organizations with similar interests and goals
- Increase familiarity and involvement with professional initiatives and organizations that promote the school and community connection
- Increase collaborative efforts with community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, and adult and parent education centers

Whether middle school educators organize group activities and projects, or simply extend information regarding events and services to families, working with community partners is an essential element to a cohesive system of literacy support for students.

CDE Resources: The *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, a collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents, is a searchable database on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/>. The recommended titles reflect the quality and the complexity of the types of material students should be reading at school and outside of class. The list is available to teachers, parents, and community members and was recently updated to include literature as well as informational text for science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, math, world languages, physical education, and health. The database also contains selected texts written in Spanish.

Component 6. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. In addition to revising curriculum frameworks and instructional materials, California is updating the current statewide assessment system to align with the CCSS (See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>). At the local level, these new formative and summative assessments will be among the primary tools needed to identify student learning needs, monitor academic progress, and inform classroom instruction. They will also provide information needed

to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the district's approach to improving the literacy achievement of all students, including the differences in achievement across the disciplines.

Current Assessment System: California's current K–12 assessment system is aligned to support the implementation of the 1997 state-adopted academic content standards and to meet state and federal reporting and accountability requirements. At the center of the current state assessment system is the *Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)* program, which is composed of several assessments designed to monitor the academic progress and proficiency of students in the K–12 educational system in core subjects. The *STAR* Program consists of four components:

- *California Standards Tests (CST)*: The *CSTs* are criterion-referenced tests that assess students' progress in mastering the California academic content standards in ELA, mathematics, science, and history-social science in grades two through eleven.
- *Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS)*: The *STS* are criterion-referenced tests that are aligned to the California content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics and assess mastery of the content standards in those subjects in grades two through eleven. Spanish-speaking English learners are required to take the *STS* if they receive instruction in Spanish or have been enrolled in a United States school for less than 12 months when testing begins. In addition, these students take the *CST* and/or *California Modified Assessment*. School districts have the option of administering the *STS* to Spanish-speaking English learners who have been enrolled in school in the U.S. for 12 months or more and are not receiving instruction in Spanish.
- *California Modified Assessment (CMA)*: The *CMA* is an alternate assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science for eligible students who have an IEP and meet the *CMA* eligibility criteria adopted by the SBE.
- *California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)*: The *CAPA* is an alternate performance assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science. It is an individually administered assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities who have an IEP.

California also uses two assessments that are not a part of the *STAR* program:

- The *California English Language Development Test: The CELDT* was developed to (1) identify English learners; (2) determine English learners' levels of English proficiency; and (3) assess the progress of English learners in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This test helps to inform educators in developing language instruction designed to assist English learners to achieve English-language proficiency.
- The *California High School Exit Examination: The CAHSEE* is aligned to the California content standards in ELA and mathematics. The primary purpose of the *CAHSEE* is to (1) significantly improve student achievement in public high schools; and (2) ensure that students who graduate from public high schools can demonstrate grade-level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. High school students must pass both sections of the *CAHSEE* to receive a high school diploma.

New Statewide Assessment Initiatives: In June 2011, California became a governing state in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) which allows the state to vote in fiscal and policy decisions and serve in work groups developing the various components of the new assessment system. The new system will emphasize the use of assessments to monitor progress and inform instruction in addition to serving as an accountability measure. California educators will play a significant role designing, developing, and scoring assessment items and performance tasks. Updated information on the SBAC is available on the California Department of Education Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>. California is also a member of the State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (Council of Chief State School Offices 2011) as it implements the CCSS. California's participation in these groups and its implementation of the *SRCL Plan* will ensure that the progress of all students in meeting grade-level academic content standards is being measured and monitored.

Effective Assessment Practices: To effectively participate in the state's new comprehensive literacy assessment efforts, school leaders should take the following steps:

- Implement screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative progress monitoring systems that are aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*

- Expand the use of district assessment systems if needed to (1) provide timely and appropriate language and literacy screening and assessments for identifying students who may need additional instructional support; and (2) inform instruction
- Establish local criteria for student benchmarks that will assist in determining the level of intervention, if needed, within RtI²
- Utilize variations, accommodations, and modifications of state assessments to align with the research on appropriate measures to take with high-stakes testing for English learners and students with disabilities
- Ensure that instruction is flexible, based on the analysis of assessment data, including data from the RtI² approach
- Use appropriate assessments, tools, measurements, and variations or accommodations for individual students as appropriate
- Communicate assessment data and instructional decisions to families of all students and increase frequency of communication for students requiring interventions, struggling readers, students receiving special education services, and English learners

Uses of Assessment Data: The transition to the *CCSS for ELA* brings with it many challenges as well as benefits and opportunities to improve educational practices and student achievement. California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. Since the inception of the Federal *No Child Left Behind* requirement, assessment data have been produced, collected, and reported by LEAs as required, but there continues to be a need to more effectively use data to inform instruction and monitor progress to increase student achievement. The new assessment system will allow for more practical and productive use of data to inform and improve instruction and will be designed to support student achievement rather than simply provide a new measure of accountability.

Well in advance of the implementation of the new assessments, districts should make it a priority to maintain and/or establish a Web-based data system for teachers and administrators to aggregate data at the school and district levels to identify student subgroups needing additional instructional support in language and literacy development.

At the local level, LEAs should integrate technology into assessment practices by:

- Establishing electronic methods for collecting and recording all assessment data in an efficient and timely fashion
- Improving process for early identification and monitoring of struggling readers through the use of assessment data to leverage the implementation of targeted instruction and raise achievement levels
- Establishing ongoing collaboration between teachers and administrators to analyze student data
- Establishing a system for recording and articulating student assessment data among administrators, teachers, and parents and families
- Implementing language and literacy assessments and longitudinal data monitoring of individual student progress in English and the student's home language, as appropriate

Progress monitoring data can be used to:

- Measure and guide effective instruction
- Direct RtI² planning
- Inform the Individualized Education Plan process, English learner instruction, and accelerated programs

Component 7. Accountability

The cornerstone of the state's accountability system is the Academic Performance Index (API), a scale ranging from 200 to 1000, which measures improvement through annual growth for public schools, statistically significant subgroups of students, and districts. A school's score or placement on the API is an indicator of the school's overall student performance level on statewide assessments. The California API performance target for all schools and districts is 800, and a school's growth is measured by how well the school is moving toward or past that goal.

Public schools and districts must also meet the federal accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The API is one of four indicators used to measure whether schools or districts have met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets that the SBE established. The federal AYP accountability system requires schools to meet annual benchmarks toward an ultimate goal of having 100 percent of students achieving proficiency or above in ELA and mathematics by 2014.

Along with the transition to the *CCSS for ELA* and the development of a new statewide assessment system, California will have new information available for the state accountability system. California's current accountability system is a cross-sectional model that evaluates school performance from one year to the next. It does not currently evaluate individual student progress. With the advent of the new assessment system, more information, including an individual student growth score, will be available for use in the state's accountability system. This new information will enable California to implement a growth model system—a method of measuring individual student progress on statewide assessments by tracking individual student scores from one year to the next—to ensure that schools and LEAs are held accountable for all students achieving proficiency on assessments measuring grade-level standards.

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight

The following goals and objectives are provided as guidance to assist local educational agencies in developing local literacy plans:

Component: Standards and Frameworks
Goal: Align revised curriculum frameworks and <i>California</i> ELD Standards with the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> .
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and implement the key indicators in the revised curriculum frameworks, the <i>California ELD Standards</i>, and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> as they relate to future success in literacy.• Integrate technology into the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> alignment and implementation processes.

Resources:

California's *Career Technical Education Standards and Framework* <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/>

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/appendixesandreferences.pdf#search=College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20Anchor%20Standards%20for%20Reading&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/index.asp>

Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/librarystandards.pdf>

California ELD Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/rlafw.pdf>

Standards for Global Learning in the Digital Age. <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Articulated and Aligned Curriculum
Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of curriculum, based on the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> , that aligns to the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from birth through grade twelve, to ensure that each student is college and career ready.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Align curriculum to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Integrate literacy instruction aligned to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Implement the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> in history/social studies, science, and technical subject courses.Use the national <i>College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards</i> as a resource in implementing the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.Establish articulation practices among educators in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, as well as in grade-level and disciplines to successfully transition all students school to ensure a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction.Provide for new grade six through eight ELA and subject-area adopted materials that align to the new <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Ensure educators know and understand how a comprehensive, well-articulated curriculum that begins with the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i> translates into academic success with the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>, the <i>California ELD Standards</i>, and the national <i>College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards</i>.Ensure that informational, discipline-specific text used in ELA, history/social studies, science, and technology courses are consistent with level of text complexity and the rigor called for in the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.Develop an integral role for technology in the implementation of the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.

Resources:

California's *Career Technical Education Standards and Framework* <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/>

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/appendixesandreferences.pdf#search=College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20Anchor%20Standards%20for%20Reading&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/index.asp>

A Look at Grades Seven and Eight in California Public Schools: Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/glcgr7_8april2012.pdf

A Look at Kindergarten Through Grade Six: www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/grlevelcurriculum.asp

California ELD Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/rlafw.pdf>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Comprehensive, Targeted, Instruction and Intervention

Goal: Provide effective initial classroom instruction aligned with *CCSS for ELA* and paired with a multiple-tiered system of support (such as Response to Instruction and Intervention) as needed.

Objectives:

- Provide all students in grades six through eight access to challenging, comprehensive, and integrated core curriculum and/or a career technical program that applies academic content to real-life situations to prepare them for college and career.
- Deliver explicit literacy instruction across disciplines using multiple delivery approaches that maximize students' active engagement with text and extensive opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- Develop and institute direct, explicit comprehension opportunities in the disciplines that assist students in becoming active and responsive readers, writers, listeners, and speakers.
- Provide differentiated literacy instruction based on well-designed and well-implemented plans for struggling students through a multi-tiered system of identification and support such as RtI².
- Identify and address the specific instructional needs of all students, with a particular focus on students with disabilities, English learners, students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and African American and Hispanic students.
- Implement UDL strategies to ensure access for all learners to the knowledge and skills being taught, so all students can demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways thus reducing barriers to instruction and providing appropriate accommodations and challenges for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited-English-proficient.
- Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction, so that all students can demonstrate creative and critical thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes through the use of technology.
- Individualize learning for all students through frequent, appropriate use of technology in each classroom and other learning environments
- Use technology in intervention programs, such as Title I, special education, reading intervention, and English learner programs.

Resources:

A Look at Grades Seven and Eight in California Public Schools: Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/glcgr7_8april2012.pdf

A Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success: http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/time_to_act_2010_v_3.pdf

Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Brief: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Practice%20Brief-Struggling%20Readers.pdf>

Taking Center Stage – Act II: California Department of Education's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success: <http://pubs.cde.ca.gov/tcsii/recsforsuccess/recsforsuccessindx.aspx>

Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/documents/yr12elflyer.pdf>

Improving Literacy Instruction in Middle and High Schools: A Guide for Principals. Center on Instruction: <http://www.fcrr.org/Interventions/pdf/Principals%20Guide-Secondary.pdf>

Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/inclusionworks.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy: http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/tta_Lee.pdf

Reading next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (2nd ed.): <http://www.all4ed.org/files/ReadingNext.pdf>

Response to Intervention (RtI) and English Learners: Making it Happen: <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/product?ISBN=0137048904>

Transforming Education through Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.cast.org>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of professional learning that addresses the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from infancy through grade twelve to ensure each student is college and career ready.

Objectives:

- Provide professional learning for grade six through eight educators so that they can know, understand, and implement the *CCSS for ELA*, the *California ELD Standards*, and *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards*.
- Establish central hubs and community-sharing sites, both technical and non-technical, for educators to exchange resources and professional learning opportunities.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to assist educators in learning how to build partnerships with families to promote students' development of language and early literacy skills.
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society.
- Increase communication and understanding between elementary, middle, high school, and higher education stakeholder groups regarding the preparation of educators and California's *SRCL Plan*.
- Move the state literacy plan forward through local organizational structures such as Professional Learning Communities, which are designed to follow professional learning guidance of the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards for Professional Learning*.
- Integrate literacy instruction in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement a multi-tiered support system process, such as RtI², including defining an effective system, research-based pedagogy, targeted intervention, state- and district-adopted instructional materials, and assessment within all tiers.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement differentiated and effective strategies and practices to meet the needs of students who traditionally score below grade-level expectations on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities, as well as for high achieving students.
- Establish system-based leadership at the district level to identify learning resources, prioritize needs based on data and teacher input, and

provide access to high-quality literacy learning opportunities for kindergarten through grade 5 educators.

- Ensure that administrators have the knowledge and skills needed to support and monitor implementation of curriculum and instruction, including the use of effective literacy instructional practices.
- Embed best practices in disciplinary literacy, literacy research, and literacy instruction into all teacher and administrator preparation and professional learning programs including the *CCSS for ELA* focus on close reading, text analysis, and styles of discourse.
- Provide cross-curricular professional learning on literacy development, especially in terms of vocabulary, academic language, comprehension, and the development of content knowledge.

Resources:

Beginning Teachers Support & Assessment (BTSA): <http://www.btsa.ca.gov/>

California Career Technical Education Standards and Framework: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/>

California Standards for the Teaching Profession: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/CSTP-2009.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/te/ce/par03.asp>

Standards for Professional Learning: <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards.cfm>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Engaging Families and Community
Goal: Ensure multiple opportunities for all families (regardless of home language, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation) to be actively involved and engaged in their children's education.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a welcoming environment, both on and off campus, to deliver the message that family involvement is highly valued and encouraged regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.• Establish regular opportunities for communication between education staff and families, in home languages as needed.• Communicate expectations, processes, and program changes to families in a timely manner, particularly in regard to reclassification of language levels, in home languages as needed.• Inform families in a timely fashion of their students' ongoing language and literacy progress and the types of instruction required, in home languages as needed.• Engage and involve families as active participants in the implementation of an instructional program that is based on current and confirmed research, aligned to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>, in a multiple tiered system of support approach, in home languages as needed.• Strongly encourage and support literacy in students' first languages to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy.• Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions from elementary grade levels into middle school and middle into high school with access to college and career information, in home languages as needed.• Refer to the <i>Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts</i> for guidance with engaging families and community.• Refer to CDE's <i>Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve</i> to provide families and community members with guidance on quality literature, in home languages as needed.• Establish online sources for teachers, families, and students to access information to better understand the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> literacy standards and the <i>California ELD standards</i>, in home languages as needed.

- Offer support to families to ensure that they have access to and understand email and Internet sources that teachers and administrators use to communicate, in home languages as needed.
- Identify and utilize technology (Internet search, multi-media, and online documents) that teachers, school library staff, and public librarians can assist families in accessing, in home languages as needed.
- Offer families assistance in supporting their children's language and literacy goals, including the importance of academic vocabulary in the home, as the children make progress toward college and career readiness, in home languages as needed.

Resources:

Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts: http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf

Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Goal: Provide a timely and efficient system that includes screening, diagnosis, formative, and summative assessments of language development and literacy needs to inform instruction, and provide comprehensive support for each student at the district and site level using California's statewide assessment systems.

Objectives:

- Expand local assessment systems to include longitudinal monitoring of child/student progress using California's statewide assessment systems.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to teachers and administrators to understand formative and summative assessments within the *CCSS for ELA* literacy framework, progress monitoring within a multi-tiered system of support, testing accommodations and variations for students with disabilities and English learners, and the timely use of data to inform instruction.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing updated technology for assessment practices, including hardware for computer-based assessment and Web-based data systems for teachers and administrators to help document student growth longitudinally and to efficiently identify students needing support in language and literacy development.
- Establish ongoing collaboration between administrators and teachers to analyze student assessment data to inform instruction, including regularly scheduled opportunities for multi-tiered systems of support discussions and end-of-the-year grade transition meetings.
- Use formative and summative literacy assessments routinely to gauge student learning and tailor instruction for personalized learning experiences with differentiated instruction for accelerated as well as struggling students.
- Ensure that educators understand the types and purposes of assessments and know how to analyze and use the data to meet the urgent language and literacy needs of students who traditionally score lower on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing a multi-tiered system of support for identifying students in need of intervention.
 - Use systematic screening assessments to identify students in need of additional literacy instruction.
 - Establish valid and reliable systematic assessment criteria and procedures for English learners and students with disabilities to provide students instruction at Tiers 2 and 3.
 - Ensure that educators understand the *CELDT* assessment and local and state requirements for reclassifying fluent English

proficient (RFEP) English learners.

- Ensure that educators understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) assessments and assessment requirements.
- Ensure educators can identify and use technology at every level to assist with data collection and analysis.

Resources:

California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp>

California Special Education Services & Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Response to Instruction and Intervention: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/Rtiresources.asp>

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>

State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS):
[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_\(SCASS\).htm](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_(SCASS).htm)

Goals and Objectives: Grade Six through Grade Eight (cont.)

Component: Accountability
Goal: Adopt/maintain a local system of accountability that informs stakeholders about student progress as well as formative assessments that inform instructional decisions, such as those made in RtI2 meetings.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform students and families about the transition to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and development of the new statewide assessment system based on the <i>CCSS</i> in a timely manner.• Establish a plan for the implementation of a Web-based assessment system based on screening, diagnostic, formative, progress monitoring, and new state summative tests aligned to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.• Prepare for and implement technology tools as required by state assessment and accountability programs.• Establish systems using technology to record and analyze progress monitoring data to more efficiently:• Determine the effectiveness of instruction and intervention in order to make any necessary modifications.• Use assessment data to guide instructional planning in Tiers 1, 2, and 3<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Inform the IEP process when a student is eligible for special education.○ Inform the RFEP process and ELD instructors when a student's level of English proficiency changes.○ Inform the planning and implementation of accelerated program instruction when a student's need for services changes.

Resources:

CDE Accountability <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/>

Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

This section of California's comprehensive literacy plan emphasizes the integral need to increase all students' academic achievement in ELA and the subject areas to create a cornerstone for success in college and career.

California's Urgent Need

In recent years, the concentrated and consistent efforts of California educators have resulted in increased overall student achievement gains on statewide assessments in ELA across all grades and subgroups of students; however, many of California's high school students still struggle with reading and comprehending academic text. Statewide assessment data indicate that large numbers of English learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged, African American students, and Hispanic students perform below statewide proficiency targets for ELA (see pp. 15, 22). At the secondary level, students with disabilities participating in statewide assessments are consistently the lowest performing subgroup of students (see p. 15). Furthermore, research shows that large disparities in achievement exist between higher-income and lower-income students. According to a 2012 report by the Center on Education Policy, higher-income students consistently outperform lower-income students on the NAEP (Center on Education Policy 2012).

In 2010, California high school graduation rates were among the lowest in the nation, at just 79 percent. The graduation rates among California's African American and Hispanic students were lower than any other racial/ethnic group at about 60 percent for each subgroup (CDE 2011a). These trends underscore the struggle of California high school subgroup populations to fulfill graduation requirements.

The lack of proficiency demonstrated by students on statewide assessments and the high numbers of college students requiring remedial courses highlight the need to improve instruction in literacy in grades K–12. To that end, developing quality local literacy plans focused on improving academic achievement across the disciplines will provide a springboard for college and career readiness. Defining processes for identifying persistently underserved student subgroups, individual students in need of intervention support, and implementing research-based reading, writing, listening, and speaking instruction will provide a pathway of consistency and coherence across the high school academic program.

The Research

California's past literacy education efforts have focused primarily on professional learning for teachers in reading instruction in the elementary grades. The *CCSS for ELA* focus on literacy education for middle and high school students by emphasizing skills and strategies in students' ability to read and comprehend informational text inside and outside of the ELA classroom. In grades nine through twelve, the ability to read complex text and understand the discourse and style of the disciplines becomes essential as students progress through high school preparing for college and career; however, research indicates that many students struggle with these essential skills.

Although subject-area teachers in high school use many strategies to support their students' growth, current research suggests that students' literacy skills could be enhanced by providing more effective instruction in comprehension strategies, encouraging discussion, setting higher standards, emphasizing the reading-writing connection, and focusing on motivation and engagement. Teaching literacy strategies to access content supports learning of the most essential concepts by all students, especially students who struggle with reading (Toregesen 2007a).

Essential student literacy skills include:

- An ability to read text accurately and fluently
- An ability to access background knowledge and vocabulary required to understand the content
- An ability to use reading strategies that improve and support understanding
- An ability to think and reason about the information and concepts in the text
- Motivation to understand and learn from text

Establishing a strong local literacy plan is essential for LEAs that serve students in high-poverty areas to address the needs of students who struggle with literacy across the disciplines, especially those from underserved subgroups.

California's Plan

Despite school funding reductions in recent years, California's student achievement for all subgroups continues to rise when compared to previous years' assessments—a testament to student, teacher, and school leadership's implementation of research-based efforts to raise academic achievement.

Key documents, such as the 2011 publication *A Blueprint for Great Schools*, offer state and school leadership a foundational agenda for developing a state-of-the-art 21st Century learning system (CDE 2011a). Underpinning these and other efforts to align the resources of the state's educational system is the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* in California's K–12 classrooms.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

The Continuum on the following page outlines the key ideas of the *Early Learning Foundations* and the *CCSS for ELA*. This illustrates the connection with and articulation between the developmental spans of children and students, birth through grade twelve.

Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning

Building all aspects of language and literacy for college and career readiness: reading, writing, speaking, and listening from birth through grade twelve.

Early Learning (Birth – Age 5)

- Increase the development of receptive and expressive language
- Develop oral language use and progress toward conventions
- Acquire rich vocabulary and use increasingly more complex sentence structures
- Develop literacy interest and response
- Formulate concepts about print
- Develop alphabetic and word/print knowledge
- Develop phonological awareness: word awareness, syllable counting and identification, onset and rime manipulation
- Apply early reading/writing skills

Elementary (K–5)

- Develop phonemic and word recognition, concepts of print, receptive language to independent reading
- Build fluency and comprehension at grade-level complexity band
- Read balance of literary and informational text closely: ask and answer questions; identify key details, main topics, and themes; compare and contrast; identify points of view; begin to summarize & draw inferences from evidence
- Write and present opinion, informative/ explanatory, and narrative pieces appropriate to task, purpose, and audience; by grade four write multi-paragraph texts; participate in peer collaboration and review; draw evidence from texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- Learn how to engage in collaborative conversations and academic talk
- Develop command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing and speaking
- Determine word meanings using a range of strategies.
- With support, use technology for research and writing and oral presentations

Middle (6–8)

- Read/comprehend literary and informational text across disciplines independently and proficiently, develop discipline-specific literacy skills
- Read closely: understand explicit information, determine central ideas and themes, make logical inferences, analyze and cite evidence, summarize, compare structure and points of view across texts, evaluate claims
- Write and present arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives based on substantive and relevant evidence and descriptive details; address alternative claims in arguments.
- Answer research questions by evaluating evidence in multiple print and digital sources
- Prepare for and participate in collaborative discussions and purposeful academic talk
- Acquire/use increasingly complex academic and domain-specific vocabulary and conventions of English grammar and usage
- Integrate digital media and technology for research, collaboration, writing, and presentations

High (9–12)

- Read/comprehend complex and seminal United States and world literary and informational texts across disciplines; apply discipline-specific literacy skills
- Read closely: analyze and evaluate authors' choices; compare multiple interpretations on the same text or subject
- Produce sophisticated, precise writing and presentations with deep evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of evidence from multiple sources; address strengths/limitations of claims and counterclaims; anticipate audience concerns
- Conduct sustained research to answer a question or solve a problem; assess the strengths/limitations of each source
- Initiate/participate in collaborative conversations and academic talk: advance discussions, connect to broader themes, probe reasoning and evidence, incorporate and respond to diverse perspectives, synthesize ideas, resolve conflicts
- Acquire/use increasingly sophisticated academic and domain-specific vocabulary and conventions of English grammar and usage
- Integrate digital media and technology for research, collaboration, writing, and presentations

College and Career Ready

- Demonstrate independence
- Ability to build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience/ task/purpose/ discipline
- Comprehend/critique complex materials
- Value evidence
- Communicate effectively verbally and in writing
- Use technology strategically and capably
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

Core Components: Standards and Frameworks; Articulation and Alignment; Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention; Educator Preparation and professional Learning; Engaging Families and Communities; Assessment and Progress Monitoring; Accountability

Component 1. Standards and Frameworks

The recent adoption of the *CCSS for ELA* offers California an opportunity to address student needs in meeting the challenges of rigorous high school curriculum and preparation to meet the demands of college and career. In conjunction with the new *CCSS for ELA* requirements, current legislation requires California to develop new ELA and mathematics curriculum frameworks and to update and revise the 1999 ELD standards, aligning both to the *CCSS for ELA*. All grade nine through twelve (9–12) educators should also become familiar with the new *California ELD Standards*.

California's 1997 Content Standards: The California State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the *English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: California's Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* in 1997. The standards describe what students should master in ELA by the end of each grade level. These standards will be replaced by the *CCSS for ELA* by the 2014–15 school year.

Common Core State Standards: In August 2010, the California SBE adopted the *CCSS for ELA*, with California additions. The *CCSS for ELA* are in the process of being included into instructional practices and materials in anticipation of CCSS-based assessments scheduled for release in the 2014–2015 school year. The *CCSS for ELA* are presented in four strands: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each strand progresses to a strand-specific set of college and career readiness anchor standards that are identical across all grades and content standards (CDE 2010a). Students who achieve the goals of the standards will be fluent readers, critical thinkers, informative writers, effective speakers, engaged listeners, and will use technology as a source of information and a means of communication.

In grades six through twelve, the *CCSS for ELA* follow the National Assessment of Educational Progress' guidance with an increased focus on reading informational text inside and outside of the classroom. The inclusion of the reading and writing standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and the technical subjects provides additional specificity for the application of reading skills to subject-area content. The grades six through twelve literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are meant to supplement content standards in those areas, not replace them (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010).

Emphasis on reading informational texts with increasing text complexity to substantiate written and oral arguments, academic writing, critical thinking and analysis and identifying reading and writing standards in the history/social studies, science, and technical subjects instructs students in understanding the discourse and style of different disciplines (CDE 2010a). It is critical for the high school student to engage in these activities to be competitive worldwide and especially when one considers that the *Reading Framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP) placed greater importance on reading informational text (U.S. Department of Education 2010). In grades six through twelve, the *CCSS for ELA*, which includes the *Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, follow NAEP guidance by emphasizing an increased focus on reading informational text both inside and outside the ELA classroom.

English-Language-Development Standards: In 1999, the California SBE adopted K–12 ELD standards that provide an overview of what English learners should master as they move toward fluency in English. The 1999 ELD standards are aligned to the 1997 ELA content standards and are separated into the domains of listening and speaking, reading, and writing. The levels through which English learners progress are identified as Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. The new *California ELD Standards*, aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*, are scheduled for adoption in the fall of 2012.

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve: In 2006, the California SBE adopted the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*. This framework offers a blueprint to LEAs for the implementation of the 1997 ELA content standards. The standards describe the content students should master by the end of each grade level and form the basis of curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve proficiency (CDE 2007). The new *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework* is scheduled for adoption in 2014 and will include the new *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*.

Component 2. Articulated and Aligned Curriculum

The standards describe the content knowledge and skills that students are expected to master by the end of each grade level. The curriculum is the vehicle used to teach the standards and describes what is taught. An effective curriculum is a

plan of activities and instructional strategies that engage students, is based on research, is grade-appropriate, and is aligned with state education policy. Knowledge and collaboration among educators regarding the continuum of learning that students experience as they transition through critical academic stages helps to ensure that all students succeed. Ideally educators at all levels should possess the knowledge and skills to help their students succeed in each stage of learning.

Systematic, vertical articulation practices among middle and high school educators and educators in college and career preparation programs are essential to successfully transition all students into successive academic levels. To ensure a comprehensive pathway throughout the grades, a local literacy plan's focus on the entire scope of the *CCSS for ELA* establishes academic achievement in disciplinary literacy. A local plan may also provide school leaders collaborative opportunities to encourage and facilitate articulation among all high school subject-area teachers to ease student academic transitions. Model articulation includes teachers collaborating on *CCSS for ELA* instruction within the subject areas, placing emphasis on the teaching of literacy skills and strategies in all the disciplines, implementing the guidance in the curriculum frameworks, and applying the *California ELD standards* to improve student achievement.

Key Features of the *CCSS for ELA*: The following literacy features are emphasized in the *CCSS for ELA* in the high school years:

Reading Literature Informational Text: To meet the expectations in the *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards* by the end of high school, students must continue to progress toward the final stages of the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning by reading widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts in all disciplines. In addition to the skills students need to master in middle school, the *CCSS for ELA* requires high school students to:

- Determine how an author's choices of wording, rhetoric, tone, style, and structure impact the text; evaluate the effectiveness of those choices in terms of persuasiveness, clarity, and engagement
- Compare multiple authors' interpretations of the same text, event, or subject
- Read and comprehend complex and seminal literary and informational texts both from the United States and other world perspectives

Writing: Students in high school produce writing appropriate to task and purpose, conduct research, and write over extended timeframes. In addition to the skills students need to master in middle school, the *CCSS for ELA* requires for high school students to:

- Produce more sophisticated, precise, and thorough writing with deeper research, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of evidence from multiple sources
- Compose more thorough arguments by addressing the strengths and limitations of claims and counterclaims and anticipating audience concerns
- Convey more complex ideas, concepts and information clearly, accurately and more thoroughly in informative/explanatory texts

Speaking and Listening: In the high school the *CCSS for ELA* expand the requirements of participating in collaborative conversations and preparing formal presentations from middle school by expecting students to:

- Advance discussions by connecting to broader themes, probe reasoning and evidence, incorporate and respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, synthesize ideas on multiple sides of an issue, and work to resolve contradictions
- Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions, and decision-making
- Deliver sophisticated argumentative, narrative, and informative/explanatory presentations that convey a clear and distinct perspective

Language: In high school the *CCSS for ELA* promote students' sophisticated understanding and command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage. Students should continue to expand their general academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Additionally, high school students should understand how words and language function in different contexts and be able to vary phrases and clauses to convey specific meaning and add variety and interest to writing.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* includes specific expectations for history/social studies that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading*, but vary to include specific history/social studies expectations for high school students such as:

- Citing specific evidence from and analyzing historical primary and secondary sources while accounting for historical context
- Corroborating and/or challenging author's premises and claims with evidence from other sources
- Evaluating different explanations for actions or events determining which best accords with the evidence
- Determining causal relationships among events

Reading Standards for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* includes specific expectations for science and technical subjects that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading*, but vary to include specific science and technical subject expectations for high school students such as:

- Citing specific evidence to support analysis attending to precise details and acknowledging any inconsistencies
- Analyze how the text structures information or ideas into categories or hierarchies
- Analyze specific results of experiments or tasks based on explanations in the text
- Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying data, and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other information

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects: Beginning in grade six, the *CCSS for ELA* promote writing across the curriculum and include specific expectations for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects that align to all of the *CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing*. As in ELA classrooms, students in subject-area classrooms are expected to write routinely over short and

extended time frames, conduct research projects, gather and evaluate evidence, and produce clear and coherent writing. However, the topics, style, vocabulary, and use and analysis of evidence will differ by discipline. Additionally, emphasis is placed on writing discipline-specific arguments and informative/explanatory pieces; writing narratives is not included as a standard.

To provide students with a strong foundation for college and career readiness, the high school curriculum must be intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades and subject areas. As implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* proceeds, it is critical that all stakeholders understand the essential literacy components stressed in the new standards and the changes and expectations for both students and teachers, to ensure that all students have access to the core curriculum.

Component 3. Comprehensive, Targeted Instruction and Intervention

Instruction refers to the methods and strategies used to teach a curriculum; the “how” and the “way” the curriculum is taught assists students mastering the grade level content. In a well-articulated system, aligned with standards, curriculum and instruction unite to connect students’ language and literacy learning in a balanced continuum.

In high school curriculum, standards-based instruction is critical to develop students’ literacy and proficiency in ELA to set them on a path to become lifelong readers, writers, and effective communicators (CDE 2011e). The challenge for educators is to organize and deliver effective, efficient instruction in the essential skills and concepts that students must master as they progress through the grades.

Reading instruction in high school integrated into a coordinated, comprehensive, school wide approach will ensure that all students can read and learn, to the best of their ability, from academic text, including subject-area textbooks and literature, and that they will be motivated to engage in reading for many different purposes (Denton, C. et al. 2007). The following elements aid students in successful learning from text:

- A solid foundation of high standards, strong leadership, instructional excellence, and a safe and positive school environment

- Common instructional routines and strategies implemented across disciplines (i.e., math, history-social science, science, English-language arts) to teach students content-area vocabulary and practices for comprehending content-area academic text
- Strategic instruction provided in reading classes or intervention settings
- Intensive intervention for students with more serious reading difficulties

High-quality writing, speaking, and listening instruction emphasizes and includes (CDE 2012):

- Writing from sources, so that students will be able to use evidence from multiple media texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information.
- Cultivation of argumentative and informative/explanatory writing based on conclusions drawn from evidence and analysis.
- Integration of listening and speaking skills to allow students to improve their writing draft revisions through effective engagement in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners. Through discussions, students can build on others' ideas and learn to clearly express their own.

As with reading, students entering high school without grade-level abilities in writing, speaking, and listening require intensive intervention and increased instructional time. Within LEA's referral processes for interventions, such as a RtI² process, specific attention to the needs of struggling students and special populations, such as English learners and special education students, must be incorporated.

When planning literacy activities and instruction, all high school educators should be familiar with the following concepts, practices, and resources:

Standards-Based Instruction: The Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools provides the basis for establishing criteria used for evaluating instructional materials for each grade level.

High-quality reading instruction emphasizes and includes:

Systematic, explicit instruction: A systematic and comprehensive curriculum provides a strategic sequence of instruction and a consistent instructional format. Curricula that embody these elements consistently produce larger achievement gains (Stockard 2011). Empirical evidence demonstrates that systematic and explicit instruction improves reading comprehension. Examples of strategies include establishing clear instructional targets, modeling, providing guided and independent practice with corrections, and using instruction-embedded assessments. Teachers in high school, particularly those who teach content-area classes, should be prepared to assist students with using strategies such as discussing text, summarizing, identifying arguments and providing evidence, and generating and answering questions.

Vocabulary development: High school students are continuing to develop their vocabulary knowledge and skills in sophisticated ways through their own research and by reading informational texts across disciplines with increasing levels of text complexity (CDE 2011e). In high school, students acquire and apply a full and complex range of lifelong language and literacy skills, and teachers must be prepared to provide instruction that fully recognizes and supports this critical stage of learning. To meet the challenges of the *CCSS for ELA*, the approach to essential vocabulary instruction for high school, which is often rooted in disciplinary texts, will need to be reviewed. Syntheses of research (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000 and Kamil et al. 2008) all agree that explicit instruction improves vocabulary and comprehension, which means educators, especially those working with adolescent students, need to gain a better understanding of instructional practices related to vocabulary.

Discussion around text: As text complexity increases, adolescent learners need to learn to expand discussion around text. This focus is another clear shift from how comprehension is currently taught. Discussion or “unpacking what the text says,” rather than describing feelings about the text, will achieve the ultimate goal of understanding the meaning and then moving to critique and analysis.

Extracting arguments and providing evidence: Another factor to consider are the latest results from the NAEP Reading Assessment, which show that the skills that separate advanced readers from everyone else are the ability to extract the argument from the text and provide evidence to support the response.

Motivation and engagement: Students who are motivated and engaged have higher learning outcomes. Motivation is often defined as the general attraction to a task, and engagement is the amount of time and effort that will be put forth in the task. Teachers should be knowledgeable about research-based instructional strategies and learning opportunities that promote student motivation and engagement. There needs to be a clear distinction between entertaining students and providing highly engaging activities that are closely connected to grade-level learning goals and objectives (Kamil 2008).

Students entering high school without grade-level fluency and proficiency in reading comprehension require intensive intervention and increased instructional time to address skills and strategies to independently read and comprehend grade-level text. Due to the great variation in needs of high school students, individualized instruction may require intervention with specialists who diagnose and plan for remediation with proven interventions. Including intervention pathways, such as RtI², in local literacy plans will assist educators in guiding instruction that supports student learning needs.

Universal Design for Learning: Students learn in a variety of ways and the philosophy of universal design for learning (UDL), which can be enabled by technology, is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. UDL reduces barriers to instruction; provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges; and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and EL students (U.S. Department of Education 2011). Implementing UDL may increase learning outcomes and provide rich supports for student learning (Center for Applied Special Technology 2011).

UDL empowers educators to design flexible educational environments by allowing for:

- Multiple means of representation— gives learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- Multiple means of expression— provides learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- Multiple means of engagement— taps into learner interests, challenges them appropriately, and motivates them to learn

Multi-tiered System of Support: Well-planned, differentiated literacy instruction increases success in meeting the

wide range of students' abilities. Developing educator awareness of research-based interventions, when to use them, and, based on individual student needs, which interventions are most effective for struggling readers, students with disabilities, and English learners is essential. Examples of strategies for differentiating instruction include adjusting pacing, complexity, novelty, and depth (CDE 2011e). When systematically planned differentiation strategies are used in the classroom, students with a wide range of abilities, including those with special needs, can benefit from appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction while still accessing the core content.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²): In 2008, California adopted a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, which was subsequently expanded to become Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) to emphasize general education's responsibility for implementing schoolwide high-quality instruction, positive behavioral strategies, and early intervention instructional approaches. Effective use of RtI² strategies helps to identify students who are at risk of academic failure, ensuring these students are offered appropriate interventions. The use of RtI² processes benefits all students, but is essential for students with low-literacy skills and for students who have identified disabilities.

RtI² processes help prevent academic failure at the secondary level through early and research-based instructional interventions and frequent progress monitoring. Effective use of RtI² at the secondary level provides a pathway for struggling students to receive a comprehensive curriculum that integrates language and literacy development in all content areas and builds upon student language and knowledge strengths. In addition, successful implementation of RtI² in general education may increase graduation rates and help identify students who need accelerated rates of instruction and increase graduation rates.

The RtI² process emphasizes these instructional strategies:

- High-quality first teaching in every grade and content area
- Early screening and identification of language and literacy instructional needs
- Differentiated instruction and intervention when necessary for remediation or acceleration

Administrators and leadership teams, in collaboration with teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day-to-day use of the RtI² approach. Analysis of how students respond to literacy instruction and interventions is an organizing principle for structures and programs that already exist in schools. An education system implementing RtI² promotes collaboration and shared responsibility for the literacy learning of all students across all personnel, programs, and parent inclusion processes located in any given school (CDE 2011h).

The RtI² process generally uses a three-tiered approach:

- Tier 1: Core instruction is rigorous, relevant, aligned with standards, and differentiated to accommodate students' individual needs. Tier 1 provides the foundation of a systemic RtI² approach across age and grade levels. Systematic screening, along with diagnostic and progress-monitoring assessments, provides data to guide instruction and identify students who may be struggling with grade-level reading or content, or those who need accelerated instruction. Teachers provide universal access and differentiated instruction in small flexible groups during core classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Tier 2: Supplemental, small-group instruction is provided in addition to instruction in the core curriculum. Instruction addresses specific skills that are essential for grade-level competency. At this level, students who are not making adequate progress in the core curriculum are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs based on their performance and rates of progress. In particular, linguistic attention to English learners and standard-English learners becomes essential in providing appropriate interventions.
- Tier 3: Intensive instruction accelerates learning for students who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and intervention. At this level, students may receive individualized, intensive interventions that target skill deficits for accelerated remediation of existing problems and the prevention of more severe problems. Replacement curriculum for the core curriculum or different settings may be included but should be used judiciously and based on multiple measures of assessments.

At each tier, instruction should be high quality, based on research-proven strategies and aligned with state-adopted standards. Progress monitoring assessments provide vital information to make informed decisions for instruction across the tiers to better meet the needs of individual students. Data gathered from RtI² interventions and

assessments can be utilized in the identification process to determine if a student requires special education services and allows educators and families to make informed decisions about instructional or program placement. The collaborative, data-based, decision-making, and problem-solving process among all stakeholders involved with a child is vital to the implementation of RtI². Additional information about RtI² is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/index.asp>.

Literacy needs of special populations: The use of multiple strategies is required to meet the needs of struggling readers, students with disabilities, English learners, students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with combinations of special instructional needs (CDE 2011e). Ideally local literacy plans will address the needs of these special populations and educators will provide learning pathways so that all students have universal access to the core curriculum.

When planning for universal access, educators should: utilize frequent progress-monitoring assessments; engage in careful planning and organization; differentiate to meet students' instructional needs; employ flexible grouping strategies; enlist help from other educational stakeholders; and use technology or other instructional devices. Some students may require intervention services that involve attention to specific reading skills and instruction at the appropriate levels of difficulty (CDE 1999). To address the needs of students who consistently underperform on statewide assessments, local literacy plans will include these populations:

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students: Students who live in low-income households may face many learning challenges. Students facing severe economic hardship may have nutritional concerns, inconsistent or inadequate housing arrangements, parents or guardians with limited literacy skills, and other outside influences that may significantly impact their learning performance. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students cross all racial and ethnic groups, may also be English learners or students with disabilities, and are often clustered or isolated in schools or entire districts.

Students with disabilities: An essential next step for educators is integrate an RtI² process in general education to prevent academic failure and ensure more accurate identification and placement of students in need of special education services. Equipping teachers with the knowledge to determine a student's eligibility for special education

services, should include factual evidence, such as high-quality formative and summative assessments, of a student's lack of positive response to instruction.

Educators instructing students in special education should use research-based methods and best practice teaching strategies for English learners with special needs. Strong collaboration between special education and general education teachers, as well as English Learner specialists, reading specialists, and literacy coaches, to adequately address the literacy needs and increase reading achievement of all students with disabilities is a core dynamic of a quality local literacy plan.

English learners: The 2010 CDE publication, *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches* provides instructional recommendations for language and literacy development of English learners. Incorporating guidelines from this publication into a local literacy plan is another avenue to encourage all teachers to stay current with ongoing research in the field.

Research-based instructional practices have been shown to have positive effects on increased progress toward English proficiency for English learners. Instructional strategies include: activating and strengthening students' background knowledge, promoting oral interactions and extending students' academic conversations, repeating key ideas and their associated domain-specific language, explicitly teaching grammatical structures and functions, and academic language (Echevarria and Vogt 2011). Frequent progress monitoring is essential to ensure that instruction has been successful.

For English learners to benefit from universal access to the curriculum, educators may need additional support to plan instruction, differentiate curriculum, infuse instruction with specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) techniques, and use grouping strategies effectively. Instruction in content areas should be promoted despite low literacy or limited proficiency in the English language, along with the critical-thinking and analytical skills and the particular reading strategies of the disciplines (CDE 2011e).

Educators should understand the role that primary language literacy plays in overall academic achievement, the differences between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" or high-functioning social language versus "cognitive academic language proficiency" needed for success in higher education and careers (CDE 2010d). It is critical educators address the needs of long-term English learners who lack the academic language skills to be reclassified as

fluent English proficient (Californians Together 2010). Understanding these broad concepts and applying appropriate instructional strategies are critical to improving the learning outcomes of English learners, especially in the early years of high school when course planning becomes essential for college-bound students.

Students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: Culture shapes a person's beliefs, values, and morals. In the United States, the education system has historically deculturalized Native American, African American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican students as well as students from Ireland, Southern and Eastern Europe, and Asia (Gay 2010). Culturally responsive teaching means developing an instructional environment for students that validates, affirms, illuminates, inspires, and motivates learning.

Culturally responsive instructional elements include:

- Standards-based teaching with culturally responsive literature
- Systematic teaching of situational appropriateness
- Building on cultural behaviors to create positive classroom communities
- Expansion of academic vocabulary instruction using conceptually coded words
- Creating an inviting learning environment for student success, purposeful use of texts that affirm and validate the backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences of the students
- Building an understanding and awareness of the linguistic structures of Standard English as differentiated from the home language
- Providing an accepting, affirmative, risk-free classroom environment

Most importantly, although students may not come from the same cultural or linguistic background as the teacher that difference does not mean the students have fewer abilities. Coming to school with different cultural and background references, having different interests, learning differently, and/or processing information in multiple ways are traits possessed by all children. By being more reflective and understanding students' diverse cultural backgrounds,

linguistic needs, and learning styles educators can become more aware of how they teach, how students learn, and how to increase their own instructional effectiveness for teaching all students (Terry and Irving 2010).

Effective Use of Technology: The *CCSS for ELA* and California's current digital initiatives stress the importance of using technology in the classroom to assist in meeting the standards. Effective use of technology targets specific learning tasks and is informed by research-based, best-practice methods. The *CCSS for ELA* emphasize the use of technology as an integral part of instruction, learning, and assessment, as well as analysis of data to track student progress and guide instructional and program decisions. The increased focus on technology and data require comprehensive and ongoing participation of all educators to encourage and promote a digital-age learning culture and facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (International Society for Technology in Education 2007).

The increased focus on technology will include each of the following stakeholders in high school settings:

- School leaders—to manage and compare data to identify model learning environments and target areas in need of intervention or reform
- Teachers—to document learning and track progress, as well as serve as an instructional and assessment tool to support learner-centered practices
- Students—to use technology as a learning tool for practice, research, and collaboration

An important first step is for all educators and students to have equal access to current technology and understand how to use it. The use of technology that supports the instructional goals and district-adopted curriculum will prepare students for increasingly complex life and work environments where technical skills will be required. Giving high school students meaningful purposes to think critically, solve problems, communicate, and collaborate using available technology will increase their ability to understand and use technology tools in high school, college, and career. The potential of both existing and new technologies in supporting student learning is not in the technologies themselves but the ways they are used as tools for learning (Marzano and Pickering 2003).

LEAs are encouraged to place a strong emphasis on technology use to support 21st century learning by including these practices in a local literacy plan:

- Develop a plan to increase educator and student knowledge and use of technology as an integral part of instruction and learning
- Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction and ensures that both teachers and students acquire 21st century technology skills
- Enable educators to plan strategically and integrate technology use into the classroom in innovative and meaningful ways that model digital-age work and learning
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society
- Encourage teachers to continuously improve professional practices and exhibit leadership in school and professional communities by promoting and demonstrating the effective use of digital tools and resources for literacy development

Currently teachers, with an understanding of technology, design effective and productive student learning opportunities such as engaging students in critical analysis of digital media, or assigning students to use the Internet to develop information technology literacy skills. Instruction for students in comprehending multimedia “text”—which involves accepting an expanded definition of text, reading, and literacy—is a key information technology literacy skill. Students also need to understand how to assign credibility to different media when conducting online research. These skills are especially important for high school students as they prepare for career and college transitions.

Technology integration in a literacy plan incorporates principled, research-based teaching strategies including:

- Incorporate technology skills to support 21st century instruction, learning, and home communication
- Develop electronic hubs for information and resources for teachers and families
- Develop and utilize teacher Web sites to support school to home communications
- Utilize online grade books
- Participate in technology-based assessment
- Collaborate on data analysis and interpretation

Professional learning for and by educators to increase their comfort in using technology in classroom instruction may support the development of an ongoing culture of collaboration and learning.

Disciplinary Literacy: The adoption of the *CCSS for ELA* brings additional challenges to history/social studies, science, and technical subject high school educators. Research suggests that current strategies can be further enhanced by providing more effective instruction in the following ways (Torgesen 2007):

Comprehension strategies—Incorporating practices that promote the use of effective reading strategies before, during, and after reading. Comprehension strategies are skills students can apply to improve their understanding and learning from text.

Discussion—Providing opportunities for deeper, more sustained discussion of content from text. Extended discussions can be facilitated by the teacher, or can occur as structured discussions among students in cooperative learning groups.

High standards—Setting and maintaining high standards for the level of text, conversation, questions, and vocabulary in discussions and in reading and writing assignments.

Reading-writing connection—Strengthening the reading-writing connection to improve student opportunities to reflect on the meaning of text and receive feedback on their reflections.

Motivation and engagement—Creating more engaging and motivating classrooms and interacting with students in a way that promotes internal motivation for reading. Students will learn to process text more deeply if reading is relevant to their lives, with meaningful learning goals, in an atmosphere that supports initiative and personal choice.

Content learning—Using instructional methods, such as graphic organizers or concept comparison routines that deepen understanding and show students better ways of learning new content on their own. While content-area teachers cannot be expected to teach struggling readers basic reading skills, they can teach strategies, use

appropriate instructional routines, lead and facilitate discussions, raise standards, and create engaging learning environments that help students improve their ability to comprehend text.

Although the *CCSS for ELA* bring changes and some challenges to middle school educators, the new standards incorporate many instructional recommendations that California teachers have been using successfully for years. Continued professional learning and staff collaboration will ensure that all teachers are successful implementing current research-based, best practice methods and practices for all students.

Component 4. Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

California is in the process of developing a comprehensive system of improved educator preparation and professional learning guidelines and resources that are aligned with the *CCSS for ELA* and the new *California ELD Standards*. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) is revising credentialing requirements to align with the *CCSS for ELA* and the *California ELD Standards*. Practicing educators are encouraged to participate in trainings to become familiar with the new standards, revised curriculum frameworks, and assessment requirements. At the local level, districts and schools are encouraged to develop educator learning plans that include literacy instruction as a core component.

At the heart of any educator learning plan is cohesive leadership. To successfully implement the new standards and increase student academic achievement, district and school leaders need to engage teachers in ongoing professional learning to stay informed of current research and best practices in literacy instruction and assessment. To ensure effectiveness, professional learning should become a system-wide priority at the district level—not simply a strategy for individual educator growth (Learning Forward 2011). Key to the success of any professional learning initiative at the district level is a system based on research, collaboration, learning resources, and access to high quality learning opportunities on an ongoing basis.

The establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on literacy at the local level is an effective way for LEAs to improve student achievement and instructional practice plan forward and develop local literacy plans by:

- Defining the challenge

- Identifying solution strategies
- Implementing strategies identified
- Assessing results
- Defining additional challenges

Ongoing collaboration among key stakeholders will enhance the work of PLCs and help to ensure visibility and a strong commitment to improving literacy achievement on a system-wide level. Variables that have a direct bearing on student achievement include teachers having access to books and materials, technology, professional learning, and other resources such as collaboration time.

Statewide Professional Learning Initiatives: Past professional learning initiatives have positively impacted instructional practices and increased the capacity of teachers and administrators to identify and meet the needs of struggling readers; however, a significant number of students require specific language and literacy instruction to meet their learning needs. The implementation of the *CCSS for ELA* provides an opportunity for LEAs to emphasize professional learning to target student interventions, based on proven research, and support struggling readers identified through established criteria such as the criteria described in the RtI² process.

In 2011, the California legislature enacted a requirement for the CDE to develop a series of interactive professional learning modules on topics related to the implementation of the *CCSS for ELA*. By the end of 2012, school leaders and teachers will be able to electronically access a variety of resources pertaining to specific topics within each module for independent learning or onsite training workshops. The learning modules will incorporate specific strategies for literacy instruction in all grade spans and content-areas.

In 2012, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction established an Educator Excellence Task Force, representing a joint effort between the CDE and the CTC to strengthen the California teacher corps. The Educator Excellence Task Force produced the *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* report that includes recommendations to:

- Develop comprehensive recruitment, training and preparation frameworks for both new and experienced educators

- Encourage the development of more effective educator evaluation systems
- Ensure that these systems are supported by training for evaluators, mentoring for teachers, and professional learning programs
- Recommend how these systems should be designed, supported, and implemented

Recognizing the central role that teachers and school leaders play in improving student learning, the establishment of the Educator Excellence Task Force system will lead to teachers who are consistently well-prepared and well-supported and who continue to have opportunities to grow throughout their careers. Additional information about the task force is available on the CDE Educator Excellence Task Force Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ee.asp>.

Support for Professional Learning: California's commitment to professional learning will consist of supports to education leaders and teachers including, but not limited to:

- Integration of the *CCSS for ELA* and the new *California ELD Standards* in all content-area courses
- *CCSS for ELA* implementation support resources, including implementation guides and professional learning modules, that incorporate research-based instructional practices and strategies that address the learning needs of all students
- Guidance and support for the organization of intervention processes in a tiered approach as suggested by the RtI² approach
- Guidance and support for the implementation of site-based, collaborative approach to data analysis that addresses individual student needs, analyzes items and errors, and measures student growth through multiple assessment measures
- Guidance and supports for the implementation of integrated technology into daily curriculum and home communication to guide educator preparation and professional learning

California has adopted rigorous educator standards to guide coursework and expectations in administrator and teacher education programs. California's educator standards require these programs to base content and instruction upon state and nationally recognized criteria to help develop and support outstanding educators.

Educator Standards: Standards for educator knowledge serve as important guides for the content of state certification programs and professional learning course offerings. The CTC awards credentials and certificates on the basis of completion of programs that meet standards for educator preparation and competence. For each type of professional credential in education, the CTC has developed and adopted standards based upon recent research and expert advice of professional educators (CTC 2008). Such standards focus on knowledge of both content and pedagogy.

California bases its educator preparation on one comprehensive set of standards:

Common Standards: The CTC has developed and adopted standards for each type of professional credential in education, which are based upon recent research and the expert advice of many professional educators. Each standard specifies a level of quality and effectiveness that the CTC requires from programs offering academic and professional preparation in education. When a new program is proposed, an institution submits a Common Standards Addendum to address how the new program will integrate with the already approved programs (CTC 2008).

California bases its professional learning guidance on two sets of standards:

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession: This 2009 publication was jointly developed by the CTC and the CDE. These standards set forth the expectations for current classroom teachers and provide them with a common language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the profession by which all teachers can define and develop their practice. The standards are not regulations that control the specific actions of teachers, but instead act as guides for teachers as they develop, refine, and extend their practice (CTC 2009).

The Standards for Professional Learning: In 2011, the *National Staff Development Council Standards* were revised into a new publication called the *Standards for Professional Learning*. Developed by Learning Forward, with extensive contributions from professional and education organizations, the standards define the essential elements and conditions needed for professional learning that lead to more effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. The standards emphasize that the fundamental purpose of professional learning is for

educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward 2011).

Increased focus on and dissemination of educator standards will help to ensure that future and current school leaders and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the *CCSS for ELA* and help all students achieve academically. Education leaders and teachers should review the new educator standards within a collaborative team, carefully reflect on the implications of the standards for their county, district, or school and begin to develop a system-wide educator learning plan (Learning Forward 2011).

Expanded Learning: The SRCL Plan emphasizes the continuum of learning that occurs from birth through grade twelve. To effectively participate in this continuum, an educator learning plan for all high school educators incorporates the following:

- New requirements of the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards* in ELA and content-area courses
- Curriculum alignment and transitions from middle school to high school and from high school to college and career
- Research and best practices in literacy instruction
- Literacy needs of special populations, including students with disabilities, English learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students
- Appropriate challenges for high-achievers and increased expectations for all students
- Increasing cultural sensitivity and reducing socioeconomic barriers
- State policy and requirements
- Organization of intervention processes using a multi-tiered approach (such as RtI²) to meet the diverse needs of all students
- Assessment tools in language and literacy
- Effective use of technology

- Conducting family outreach activities to communicate and collaborate about ways to support language and literacy learning and development
- Successfully implementing literacy instruction into Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs

Measuring Learning Outcomes: Ongoing measurements of educator learning, including evaluations and observation to measure educator understanding and use of learned strategies, are essential to ensure preparation and professional learning objectives are met, with additional support provided, as needed.

Educator Collaboration: As emphasized throughout this plan, educator collaboration is a critical element to any successful literacy plan. Multiple opportunities exist at the LEA level for increased staff collaboration on literacy efforts and professional learning as they formulate local literacy plans. Existing programs such as BTSA and PAR are examples of highly effective collaborative support systems that are currently in place in California. In addition, educators can participate in ongoing collaboration and peer-learning through social networks, education blogs, and initiatives such as the California Brokers of Expertise Project. This CDE sponsored Web site is available at <http://www.myboe.org/>. Education leaders are encouraged to utilize these resources, as well as any new learning support initiatives at the local level.

Increased communication across early childhood education, K–12 education, and higher education stakeholder groups, along with increased articulation across the grade spans, will be vital to the success of California’s statewide literacy efforts. The desired outcome of this communication is an effective and aligned plan that will be implemented statewide. The *SRCL* team will continue to share research and resources related to teacher preparation and professional learning to support literacy instruction aligned to the *CCSS for ELA* in all grades and content areas, including ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Component 5. Engaging Families and Communities

California is poised to implement a connected, comprehensive system of literacy foundations and standards from infancy through grade twelve that includes families and communities as partners. Using the standards, foundations, and strong

partnerships, instruction at the local level will more effectively address the needs of all students, including those belonging to historically underperforming subgroups, English Learners, and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Improved communication and collaboration with families and communities are keys to the success of any local literacy plan.

Family Involvement and Support: Involving families as partners in the literacy development of students is an integral part of a seamless support system. To fully support a comprehensive, articulated, and aligned system, families must become aware of the expectations that will be required of their children as they move through the K–12 system. During the high school years, families need to become familiar with the rigor that their children will experience in preparation for post-secondary education and need multiple opportunities to participate as active partners in their children’s education. Active family involvement, along with effective outreach and parent education opportunities, are essential to increase academic skills among adolescent students. To effectively involve families as partners, school leaders should:

- Emphasize ongoing communication between school and home in English and the home language, as needed
- Create a welcoming environment at school to encourage family involvement as partners in learning
- Utilize multiple mediums for communication, including technology, and provide alternative means if family does not have access to technology
- Provide services in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner
- Encourage parent education and promote involvement in school, home, and community activities that promote family literacy
- Encourage and support literacy in a student’s first language (if other than English) to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy
- Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions from middle school to high school and from high school to post-secondary education or career

Beginning with effective and frequent communication between district and school offices and the homes of students, communication with families must allow for frequent interactions with teachers and knowledge of classroom expectations and progress toward meeting performance goals. School leaders and teachers must ensure that families receive easily accessible information and learning opportunities to support the language and literacy development of their children, including, but not limited to:

- Progress toward achieving mastery of the *CCSS for ELA* and *California ELD Standards*, if applicable
- The types of student assessments
- The RtI² instructional approach
- The role of technology in instruction
- Self-paced and self-selected independent reading
- Academic vocabulary

Schools leaders must also ensure opportunities for active involvement of English Learners and students with disabilities and their families by providing information on their school's targeted services, programs, assessments, student progress, and longitudinal test data. Parents and guardians of English Learners must have knowledge of the criteria and process for reclassification from English Learner to fluent English proficient and the importance of English proficiency to their student's academic success and readiness for college and career. Parents and guardians must also understand the specific lack of literacy proficiency that may prevent reclassification.

The 2011CDE publication, *Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts*, helps school districts engage families in their children's education. The Framework, produced in collaboration with the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd is outlined to help school districts evaluate their progress and plan for improvements and emphasizes the strong link between parental involvement activities and student achievement. The Framework provides specific examples of what schools, communities, and parents can do to help students succeed. The publication also contains a list of articles that school administrators and teachers can read to create effective, research-based practices in family engagement (CDE 2011g). The document is available on the WestEd Web site at http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf.

Community Involvement and Support: Multiple opportunities exist for high school educators to reach out to community organizations for support and collaboration. Primarily, school leaders should maintain contact with the feeder middle schools, as well as local community colleges, to establish mutual goals and support to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions.

Additional community partners include grant makers that invest in mutual educational projects; corporate sponsors; professional organizations and collaborative projects; community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, adult and parent education programs; and other local supporters of literacy and learning.

To increase community involvement and collaboration, high school educators may:

- Increase collaborative efforts between middle school and college educators to ensure vertical alignment and facilitate transitions
- Seek public, private, foundation, or corporate grants for literacy program support from organizations with similar interests and goals
- Increase familiarity and involvement with professional initiatives and organizations that promote the school and community connection
- Increase collaborative efforts with community organizations such as libraries, local businesses, and adult and parent education centers

Whether high school educators organize group activities and projects, or simply extend information regarding events and services to families, working with community partners is an essential element to a cohesive system of literacy support for students.

CDE Resources: The *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, a collection of outstanding literature for children and adolescents, is a searchable database on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/>. The recommended titles reflect the quality and the complexity of the types of material students should be reading at school and outside of class. The list is available to teachers, parents, and community members and was recently

updated to include literature as well as informational text for science, social studies/history, visual and performing arts, math, world languages, physical education, and health. The database also contains selected texts written in Spanish.

Component 6. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

In addition to revising curriculum frameworks and instructional materials, California is updating the current statewide assessment system to align with the CCSS. At the local level, these new formative and summative assessments will be among the primary tools needed to identify student learning needs, monitor academic progress, and inform classroom instruction. They will also provide information needed to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of a district's approach to improving the literacy achievement of all students, including the differences in achievement across the content areas.

Current Assessment System: California's current K–12 assessment system is aligned to support the implementation of the 1997 state-adopted academic content standards and to meet state and federal reporting and accountability requirements. At the center of the current state assessment system is the *Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR)* program, which is composed of several assessments designed to monitor the academic progress and proficiency of students in the K–12 educational system in core subjects. The *STAR* Program consists of four components:

- *California Standards Tests (CST)*: The *CSTs* are criterion-referenced tests that assess students' progress in mastering the California academic content standards in ELA, mathematics, science, and history-social science in grades two through eleven.
- *Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS)*: The *STS* are criterion-referenced tests that are aligned to the California content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics and assess mastery of the content standards in those subjects in grades two through eleven. Spanish-speaking English learners are required to take the *STS* if they receive instruction in Spanish or have been enrolled in a United States school for less than 12 months when testing begins. In addition, these students take the *CST* and/or *California Modified Assessment*. School districts have the option of administering the *STS* to Spanish-speaking English learners who have been enrolled in school in the U.S. for 12 months or more and are not receiving instruction in Spanish.

- *California Modified Assessment (CMA)*: The *CMA* is an alternate assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science for eligible students who have an IEP and meet the *CMA* eligibility criteria adopted by the SBE.
- *California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)*: The *CAPA* is an alternate performance assessment to the *CSTs* for ELA, mathematics, and science. It is an individually administered assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities who have an IEP.

California also uses two assessments that are not a part of the *STAR* program:

- The *California English Language Development Test: The CELDT* was developed to (1) identify English learners; (2) determine English learners' levels of English proficiency; and (3) assess the progress of English learners in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This test helps to inform educators in developing language instruction designed to assist English learners to achieve English-language proficiency.
- The *California High School Exit Examination: The CAHSEE* is aligned to the California content standards in ELA and mathematics. The primary purpose of the *CAHSEE* is to (1) significantly improve student achievement in public high schools; and (2) ensure that students who graduate from public high schools can demonstrate grade-level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. High school students must pass both sections of the *CAHSEE* to receive a high school diploma.

New Statewide Assessment Initiatives: In June 2011, California became a governing state in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, which allows the state to vote in fiscal and policy decisions and serve in work groups developing the various components of the new assessment system. The new system will emphasize the use of assessments to monitor progress and inform instruction in addition to serving as an accountability measure. California educators will play a significant role designing, developing, and scoring assessment items and performance tasks. Updated information on the SBAC is available on the California Department of Education Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>. California is also a member of the State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (Council of Chief State School Offices 2011) as it implements the CCSS. California's participation in these groups and its implementation of the *SRCL Plan* will ensure that the progress of all students in meeting grade-level academic content standards is being measured and monitored.

Effective Assessment Practices: To effectively participate in the state's new comprehensive literacy assessment efforts, school leaders should take the following steps:

- Implement screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative progress monitoring systems that are aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*.
- Expand the use of district assessment systems if needed to (1) provide timely and appropriate language and literacy screening and assessments for identifying students who may need additional instructional support; and (2) inform instruction.
- Establish local criteria for student benchmarks that will assist in determining the level of intervention, if needed, within RtI².
- Utilize variations, accommodations, and modifications of state assessments to align with the research on appropriate measures to take with high-stakes testing for English learners and students with disabilities.
- Ensure that instruction is flexible, based on the analysis of assessment data, including data from the RtI² approach.
- Use appropriate assessments, tools, measurements, and variations or accommodations for individual students as appropriate.
- Communicate assessment data and instructional decisions to families of all students and increase frequency of communication for students requiring interventions, struggling readers, students receiving special education services, and English learners.

Uses of Assessment Data: California's *A Blueprint for Great Schools* emphasizes the use of data analysis to measure progress and inform instruction. Since the inception of the Federal *No Child Left Behind* requirement, assessment data have been produced, collected, and reported by LEAs as required, but there continues to be a need to more effectively use data to inform instruction and monitor progress to increase student achievement. The new assessment system will allow for more practical and productive use of data to inform and improve instruction, and will be designed to support student achievement rather than simply provide a new measure of accountability.

Well in advance of the implementation of the new assessments, LEAs will be able to maintain and/or establish a Web-based data system for teachers and administrators to aggregate data at the school and district levels to identify student subgroups needing additional instructional support in language and literacy development.

At the local level, LEAs will be able to integrate technology into assessment practices by:

- Establishing electronic methods for collecting and recording all assessment data in an efficient and timely fashion
- Improving process for early identification and monitoring of struggling readers through the use of assessment data to leverage the implementation of targeted instruction and raise achievement levels
- Establishing ongoing collaboration between teachers and administrators to analyze student data
- Establishing a system for recording and articulating student assessment data among administrators, teachers, and parents and families
- Implementing language and literacy assessments and longitudinal data monitoring of individual student progress in English and the student's home language, as appropriate

Educators will be able to use progress monitoring data to:

- Measure and guide effective instruction
- Direct RtI² planning
- Inform the Individualized Education Plan process, English learner instruction, and accelerated programs

Component 7. Accountability

The cornerstone of the state's accountability system is the Academic Performance Index (API), a scale ranging from 200 to 1000, which measures improvement through annual growth for public schools, statistically significant subgroups of students, and districts. A school's score or placement on the API is an indicator of the school's overall student performance level on statewide assessments. The state API performance target for all schools and districts 800, and a school's growth is measured by how well the school is moving toward or past that goal.

Public schools and districts must also meet the federal accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The API is one of four indicators used to measure whether schools or districts have met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets that the SBE established. The federal AYP accountability system requires schools to meet annual benchmarks toward an ultimate goal of having 100 percent of students achieving proficiency or above in ELA and mathematics by 2014.

Along with the transition to the *CCSS for ELA* and the development of a new statewide assessment system, California will have new information available for the state accountability system. California's current accountability system is a cross-sectional model that evaluates school performance from one year to the next. It does not currently evaluate individual student progress. With the advent of the new assessment system, more information, including an individual student growth score, will be available for use in the state's accountability system. This new information will enable California to implement a growth model system— a method of measuring individual student progress on statewide assessments by tracking individual student scores from one year to the next— to ensure that schools and LEAs are held accountable for all students achieving proficiency on assessments measuring grade-level standards.

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

The following goals and objectives are provided as guidance to assist local educational agencies in developing local literacy plans:

Component: Standards and Frameworks
Goal: Align revised curriculum frameworks and new <i>California ELD Standards</i> with the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> .
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and implement the key indicators in the revised <i>California ELD Standards</i> and the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> as they relate to student success in literacy.• Identify and implement the key indicators in the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> literacy standards as they relate to California's <i>Career Technical Education Standards and Framework</i>.• Integrate technology into the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> alignment and implementation processes.

Resources:

California's *Career Technical Education Standards and Framework* <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/>

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/appendixesandreferences.pdf#search=College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20Anchor%20Standards%20for%20Reading&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

Common Core State Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/index.asp>

Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/librarystandards.pdf>

California ELD Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/rlafw.pdf>

Standards for Global Learning in the Digital Age. <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve (cont.)

Component: Articulated and Aligned Curriculum
Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of curriculum, based on the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the new <i>California ELD Standards</i> , that aligns to the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from birth through grade twelve, to ensure that each student is college and career ready.
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Align curriculum to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Integrate reading and writing instruction aligned to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Implement the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> in literacy and the <i>California ELD Standards</i> in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.Use the national <i>College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading</i> as a resource in implementing the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.Provide professional learning for educators to develop a comprehensive, well-articulated curriculum supporting high school student transition within the grade levels and into college and career. Establish vertical articulation practices among educators in programs, schools, and grade-level content departments to successfully transition all students, especially from elementary to middle and middle to high school.Ensure that new grade nine through twelve ELA adopted materials align to the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.Ensure educators know and understand how a comprehensive, well-articulated curriculum, beginning with the <i>Early Learning Foundations</i>, and translating into academic success with the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>, the <i>California ELD Standards</i>, and college and career readiness.Ensure that informational, discipline-specific texts used in history/social studies, science, and technology courses are consistent with level of text complexity and the rigor called for in the <i>CCSS for ELA</i>.Allow and encourage students to use digital media to communicate and work collaboratively and use digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information for research purposes and to solve authentic problems.Develop an integral role for technology in the implementation of the <i>CCSS for ELA</i> and the <i>California ELD Standards</i>.

Resources:

A Look at Grades Seven and Eight in California Public Schools: Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/glcgr7_8april2012.pdf

California's Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
http://www.scoe.net/castandards/agenda/2010/ela_ccs_recommendations.pdf

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/appendixesandreferences.pdf#search=College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20Anchor%20Standards%20for%20Reading&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

California ELD Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

Component: Comprehensive, Targeted, Instruction and Intervention

Goal: Provide effective initial classroom instruction aligned with *CCSS for ELA* paired with a multiple-tiered system of support (such as Response to Instruction and Intervention) as needed.

Objectives:

- Provide all students in grades nine through twelve with access to a challenging, comprehensive, integrated core curriculum and/or career technical program that applies academic content to real-life situations to prepare them for college and career.
- Deliver explicit literacy instruction throughout content areas and use multiple delivery approaches that maximize students' active engagement with text and oral language development and extensive opportunities for reading and writing with grade level text.
- Develop and institute direct, explicit comprehension opportunities in the content areas that assist students in becoming active and responsive readers, writers, listeners, and speakers.
- Provide differentiated literacy instruction based on well-designed and implemented plans for struggling students through a multi-tiered system of identification and support, such as RtI².
- Identify and address the specific instructional needs of all students, with a particular focus on students with disabilities, English learners, students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and African American and Hispanic students.
- Implement UDL strategies, as needed, to ensure that all learners have access to the knowledge and skills being taught and that all students can demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways thus reducing barriers to instruction and providing appropriate accommodations and challenges to all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited-English-proficient.
- Promote a learning culture that fully integrates technology into instruction, so that **all** students can demonstrate creative and critical thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes through the use of technology.
- Individualize learning for all students by frequent, appropriate use of technology in all classrooms and other learning places.
- Use technology applications in intervention programs, such as Title I, special education, reading intervention, and English learner programs.

Resources:

A Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success:
http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/time_to_act_2010_v_3.pdf

Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Brief: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Practice%20Brief-Struggling%20Readers.pdf>

Taking Center Stage – Act II: California Department of Education's 12 Recommendations for Middle Grades Success:
<http://pubs.cde.ca.gov/tcsii/recsforsuccess/recsforsuccessindx.aspx>

Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/documents/yr12elflyer.pdf>

Improving Literacy Instruction in Middle and High Schools: A Guide for Principals. Center on Instruction:
<http://www.fcrr.org/Interventions/pdf/Principals%20Guide-Secondary.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy: http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/tta_Lee.pdf

Reading next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (2nd ed.):
<http://www.all4ed.org/files/ReadingNext.pdf>

Response to Intervention (RtI) and English Learners: Making it Happen: <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/product?ISBN=0137048904>

Transforming Education through Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.cast.org>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

Component: Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

Goal: Establish an articulated and aligned system of professional learning that addresses the Continuum of Language and Literacy Learning from infancy through grade twelve to ensure each student is college and career ready.

Objectives:

- Provide professional learning for grade nine through twelve educators to know, understand, and implement the *CCSS for ELA*, the *California ELD Standards*, and California's *Career Technical Education Standards and Framework*.
- Establish central hubs and community-sharing sites, both technical and non-technical, for educators to exchange resources and professional learning opportunities.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to assist educators in learning how to build partnerships with families to promote students' development of language and early literacy skills.
- Enable teachers to exhibit knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of innovative professionals in a global and digital society.
- Increase communication and understanding between elementary, middle, high school, and higher education stakeholder groups regarding the preparation of educators and California's *SRCL Plan*.
- Move the state literacy plan forward through local organizational structures such as Professional Learning Communities focused on literacy, which are designed to follow professional learning guidance of the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards for Professional Learning*.
- Integrate literacy instruction into Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement a multi-tiered support system process, such as RtI², including defining an effective system, research-based pedagogy, targeted intervention, state- and district-adopted instructional materials, and assessment within all tiers.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to implement differentiated and effective strategies and practices to meet the needs of students who traditionally score lower on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities, as well as for high achieving students.
- Establish system-based leadership at the district level to identify learning resources, prioritize needs based on data and teacher input, and

provide access to high-quality literacy learning opportunities for kindergarten through grade five educators.

- Ensure that administrators have the knowledge and skills needed to support and monitor implementation of curriculum and instruction, including the use of effective literacy instructional practices.
- Embed content literacy, literacy research, and literacy instruction best practices into all teacher and administrator preparation and professional learning programs.
- Provide cross-curricular professional learning on the interrelationship between literacy development, especially in terms of vocabulary, academic language, comprehension, and the development of content knowledge.

Resources:

Beginning Teachers Support & Assessment (BTSA): <http://www.btsa.ca.gov/>

California Standards for the Teaching Profession: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/CSTP-2009.pdf>

International Society for Technology in Education: <http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx>

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/te/ce/par03.asp>

Standards for Professional Learning: <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards.cfm>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

Component: Engaging Families and Community

Goal: Ensure multiple opportunities for all families (regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity and/or sexual orientation) to be actively involved and engaged in their children's education.

Objectives:

- Create a welcoming environment, both on and off campus, to deliver the message that family involvement is highly valued and encouraged regardless of language of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.
- Establish regular opportunities for communication between education staff and families, in home languages as needed.
- Communicate expectations, processes, and program changes to families in a timely manner, especially in regard to reclassification of language levels, in home languages as needed.
- Inform families in a timely fashion of their students' ongoing language and literacy progress and the types of instruction required for each one, in home languages as needed.
- Engage and involve families as active participants in the implementation of an instructional program that is based on current and confirmed research, aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*, and based on a multiple tiered system of support approach, in home languages as needed.
- Strongly encourage and support literacy in students' first languages to provide a foundation for second-language learning and to promote biliteracy.
- Establish ongoing communication between educational staff and families of students to assist with transitions, as applicable, between pre-kindergarten, elementary grade levels, into middle school, with access to college and career information, in home languages as needed.
- Refer to the *Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts* as needed for guidance with engaging families and community.
- Refer to CDE's *Recommended Literature: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* as needed to provide families and community members with guidance on quality literature, in home languages as needed.

- Establish online sources for teachers, families, and students to access information to better understand the *CCSS for ELA* literacy standards and the new *California ELD standards*, in home languages as needed.
- Offer support to families to ensure that they have access to and understand email and Internet sources that teachers and administrators use to communicate, in home languages as needed.
- Identify and utilize technology (Internet search, multi-media, and online documents) that teachers, school library staff, and public librarians can assist families in accessing, in home languages as needed.
- Offer families assistance in supporting their children's language and literacy goals, including the importance of using academic vocabulary in the home, as the children make progress toward college and career readiness, in home languages as needed.

Resources:

Family Engagement Framework, a Tool for California School Districts: http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf

Recommended Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/II/>

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

Component: Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Goal: Provide a timely and efficient system that includes screening, diagnosis, formative, and summative assessments of language development and literacy needs to inform instruction, and provide comprehensive support for each student at the district and site level using California's statewide assessment systems.

Objectives:

- Expand local assessment systems to include longitudinal monitoring of child/student progress using California's statewide assessment systems.
- Provide guidance for professional learning to teachers and administrators to understand formative and summative assessments within the *CCSS for ELA* literacy framework, progress monitoring within a multi-tiered system of support, testing accommodations and variations for students with disabilities and English learners, and the timely use of data to inform instruction.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing updated technology for assessment practices, including hardware for computer-based assessment and Web-based data systems for teachers and administrators to help document student growth longitudinally and to efficiently identify students needing support in language and literacy development.
- Establish ongoing collaboration between administrators and teachers to analyze student assessment data to inform instruction, including regularly scheduled opportunities for multi-tiered systems of support discussions and end-of-the-year grade transition meetings.
- Use formative and summative literacy assessments routinely to gauge student learning and then tailor instruction for personalized learning experiences/differentiate instruction for accelerated as well as struggling students.
- Ensure that educators understand the types and purposes of assessments and know how to analyze and use the data to meet the urgent language and literacy of students who traditionally score lower on statewide assessments, such as English learners, African American and Hispanic students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.
- Prioritize maintaining and/or establishing a multi-tiered system of support for identifying students in need of intervention.
 - Use systematic screening assessments to identify students in need of additional literacy instruction.
 - Establish systematic assessment criteria and procedures that are valid and reliable for English learners and students with disabilities to provide students instruction at Tiers 2 and 3.

- Ensure that educators understand the *CELDT* assessment and local and state requirements for reclassifying fluent English proficient (RFEP) English learners.
- Ensure that educators understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) assessments and assessment requirements.
- Ensure educators can identify and use technology at every level to assist with data collection and analysis.

Resources:

California English Language Development Test (CELDT) Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp>

California Special Education Services & Resources: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/sr/>

Response to Instruction and Intervention: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/ri/Rtiresources.asp>

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC): <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>

State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS):

[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_\(SCASS\).htm](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/State_Collaboratives_on_Assessment_and_Student_Standards_(SCASS).htm)

Goals and Objectives: Grade Nine through Grade Twelve

Component: Accountability

Goal: Adopt/maintain a local system of accountability that informs stakeholders about student progress as well as formative assessments that inform instructional decisions, such as those made in RtI2 meetings.

Objectives:

- Inform students and families about the transition to the *CCSS for ELA* and development of the new statewide assessment system (based on the *CCSS*) in a timely manner.
- Establish a plan for the implementation of a Web-based assessment system based on screening, diagnostic, formative, progress monitoring, and new state summative tests aligned to the *CCSS for ELA*.
- Prepare for and implement technology tools as required by state assessment and accountability programs.
- Establish systems using technology to record and analyze progress monitoring data to more efficiently:
- Determine the effectiveness of instruction or intervention to make any necessary modifications.
- Use assessment data to guide instructional planning in Tiers 1, 2, and 3.
 - Inform the IEP process when a student is considered eligible for special education.
 - Inform the RFEP process and ELD instruction when a student's level of English language proficiency changes.
 - Inform the planning and implementation of accelerated program instruction when a student's need for services changes.

Resources:

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